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C.B. 3081 (5)

BATTLE SUMMARY No. 13

ACTIONS WITH ENEMY DISGUISED RAIDERS 1940-1941

1942

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C.B. 3081 (5)

BATTLE SUMMARY No. 13

ACTIONS WITH ENEMY DISGUISED RAIDERS 1940-1941

1942

TRAINING AND STAFF DUTIES DIVISION
(HISTORICAL SECTION),
NAVAL STAFF,
ADMIRALTY.

(T.S.D. 965/42)

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} *At end.*

* *See* Notes on Plans, page 26.

[NOTE.—For list of Battle Summaries, issued or in preparation, *see* page 3 of cover.]

SOURCES

This Battle Summary has been compiled from the following sources :—

M.018572/40 M.021171/40	For *Alcantara's* action.
M.02910/41 T.S.D.6133/41	For *Carnarvon Castle's* action.
M.07842/41 T.S.D.5459/41	For *Leander's* action.
T.S.D.6136/41	For *Voltaire's* action.
M.012944/41 T.S.D.5465/41	For *Cornwall's* action.
M.05540/42	For *Sydney's* action.
M.019393/41	For *Devonshire's* action.
M.0799/42	For *Dorsetshire's* action.
M.019371/41 T.S.D.6145/42	For *Dorsetshire* and *Canton*, 4th–6th November, 1941.
N.L.11382/42	For *Durban*, 13th March, 1942.
N.L.9560/42	For *Cheshire*, 14th March, 1942.
N.L. 9557/42	For *Pretoria Castle*, 26th April, 1942.

ACTIONS WITH ENEMY DISGUISED RAIDERS 1940–1941

INTRODUCTION

1. This Battle Summary deals with eight actions fought with enemy merchant ship raiders up to the end of 1941. During this period of 28 months Axis merchant ship raiders sank one British cruiser, one armed merchant cruiser, and 618,108 tons of merchant shipping.* Their own losses were three out of the seven identified during that period, and two other ships, which were probably supply ships.

These figures may be compared with those of the last war. In 1914–18, 51 months, ten armed merchant raiders sank 427,433 tons out of a total of 12,741,781 tons, or 3·3 per cent. Of the ten raiders, four were sunk, three were interned, one was wrecked, and two got back to Germany.

The action between the *Sydney* and *Kormoran* off the west coast of Australia on 19th November, 1941,† may be compared with that between the *Alcantara* and *Greif* on 28th February, 1916, in the North Sea. The *Alcantara*, approaching within torpedo range, was torpedoed, but before she sank she opened a heavy fire on the *Greif* and sent her to the bottom.

The principal lesson to be drawn from the *Alcantara's* action was the necessity of keeping well out of torpedo range. After the armed boarding steamer *Ramsey* had been torpedoed by the disguised minelayer *Meteor* in the Moray Firth on 8th August, 1915, the Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Jellicoe, issued an order warning ships to approach suspected vessels on the quarter and to avoid bearings on which torpedoes could be fired ; also that the Master of the suspected ship should be required to bring his papers on board in his own boat.‡

THE "ALCANTARA'S" ACTION, 28th JULY, 1940

2. On 15th July, 1940, H.M.S. *Hawkins*, flying the flag of Rear-Admiral Sir Henry Harwood, K.C.B., O.B.E., Rear-Admiral, South America Division, entered Montevideo for a 24-hour visit. Next day she sailed to patrol the Plate area. There had been recent indications that an enemy raider was in the North Atlantic, and on 17th July a report reached the Admiral that D/F bearings had placed a German vessel to the westward of the Cape Verde Islands on the 15th. This information, coupled with earlier reports of unidentified vessels off the coast of Ireland, indicated that a possible raider was bound for the South Atlantic. Admiral Harwood therefore ordered the armed merchant cruiser *Alcantara*,§ Captain J. G. P. Ingham, R.N., which was patrolling the Rio de Janeiro–Santos area, to patrol off Pernambuco, while the *Hawkins* moved up to the Rio–Santos area. To protect the important focal area of the Plate against a raid the Admiral intended to move both ships back to their original patrol areas by the time that the anticipated raider would be well to the southward of Pernambuco on the assumption that she was proceeding direct to the Plate at economical speed.

Next day, 18th July, the Admiral received news of the sinking by a raider in the West Indies area, on or about 13th July, of two British ships, the *Davisian*

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* Or about 7·3 per cent. of the total shipping sunk.
† *See* Section 7.
‡ Grand Fleet Order, 24th August, 1915.
§ *Alcantara*, 22,209 gross tons, 19 knots. Guns, eight 6-in., 14,000 yards range.

and *King John*,* and of the sailing of the German tanker *Rekum* from Teneriffe on 17th July. It seemed very probable that the oiler intended to refuel the raider, and from 19th to 21st July the *Hawkins* patrolled off Rio. By 22nd July Admiral Harwood estimated that if the raider had come south from the position given by the D/F bearing on the 15th she would be south of the latitude of Pernambuco, and shortly after 4.30 p.m.† he orderd the *Alcantara*, which had reached the Pernambuco area on the 20th, to proceed south to examine Trinidade‡ Island, as this island had occasionally been used by German raiders in the last war. She was subsequently to patrol an area south-west of Trinidade at a distance of over 250 miles from the South American coast.

On the 23rd the *Hawkins* fuelled from the *Arndale* north-east of Sao Sebastiao Island,§ and then patrolled the British shipping routes off the South American coast between Rio de Janeiro and the Plate.

On 25th July Admiral Harwood learned that a German submarine had sunk a Norwegian tanker near the Cape Verde Islands on the 18th. Clearly it was this submarine, and not a raider, that had been located by D/F on the 15th. Further reports from the West Indies, however, and the fact that three ships were overdue at Freetown, indicated the probability of there being one raider in the West Indies and another in the South Atlantic. During the 26th and 27th, therefore, the *Hawkins* continued patrolling the British shipping routes between Rio and the Plate.

During the forenoon of 26th July the *Alcantara* inspected the Island of Trinidade, and at noon next day was in 23° 25′ S., 31° 47′ W. At 10 a.m. on the 28th she was in 24° 39′ S., 33° 7′ W.,‖ steering N. 75° E. at 11½ knots, when the tops of two masts were sighted from her crow's nest, due east, fine on the starboard bow. She altered course to intercept, but when the range had closed to 23,000 yards the unknown ship turned momentarily towards her and then turned away. The *Alcantara* followed, and, as the range was opening, increased to 15 knots and then to full speed. By noon she was doing 20 knots and by 1 p.m. nearly 22. The day was fine and clear with a light breeze from the south-east. At 2 p.m., when the *Alcantara* was in 24° 3′ S., 31° 56′ W., the unknown vessel altered course to starboard, and, hoisting the German ensign, opened fire with a two-gun salvo at 16,000 yards, 2,000 yards beyond the extreme range of the *Alcantara's* eight 6-in. guns, followed a few seconds later by two four-gun salvos.

One shell of the two-gun salvo fell 100 yards over, on the port quarter: one of the second salvo struck the *Alcantara* just abaft her dummy funnel, and another, bursting over her quarter deck by P 4 gun, killed its trainer, severed a number of fire control leads and put its range and deflection instruments out of action. It was probably this salvo that brought down her main aerial, which was shot away between 2.6 p.m. and 2.9 p.m. A shell of the third salvo hit the *Alcantara* abreast the stokers' mess deck, and another, bursting on her quarter deck, killed the Officer of Quarters. At 2.8 p.m. a hit on the water line abreast the engine room resulted in an inrush of water, which gradually reduced her speed.

Meanwhile the *Alcantara* had opened fire at extreme range at 2.1 p.m., her first salvo falling short to the right. A hail of fragments flying around her

* S.S. *Davisian*, 6,433 tons, sunk on 10th July in lat. 18° 20′ N., long. 54° W., "447 miles N.E. of Barbados"; and M.V. *King John*, 5,228 tons, sunk on 13th July in about lat. 20° 45′ N., long. 59° 43′ W., "250 miles E.N.E. of Sombrero Channel." These are very approximate positions.

† 22nd July/1632.

‡ Formerly Trinidada.

§ Between Rio de Janeiro and Santos.

‖ About 600 miles east of Rio de Janeiro. *See* Plan 1.

fire control prevented the fall of her second salvo from being observed. The enemy, who was keeping up a very high rate of fire, was straddling constantly, and a number of shells bursting close overhead sent steel sherds whistling uncomfortably near. These explosions and the noise of the *Alcantara's* guns made it difficult for the sight-setters to hear, and the sights were soon out of step. Several times the *Alcantara* had to check fire to correct them for range and deflection. In spite of these delays she straddled the raider with a number of salvos, and at 2.13 p.m. observed a bright flash abreast her foremast. The enemy's foremost starboard gun fired no more, her salvos became ragged, and her rate of fire decreased.

By 2.20 p.m. the *Alcantara's* speed had dropped to 15 knots, and at 2.30 p.m. the raider turned away, dropping smoke floats and firing two stern guns. The *Alcantara* continued to reply, but the range, which had previously closed to 9,800 yards, was opening. At 2.35 p.m. the *Alcantara* turning to starboard opened fire with her port battery obtaining a hit on the enemy's stern. The raider replied with three of her port guns, and dropped another smoke float. By this time the *Alcantara's* speed had dropped to 10 knots, and the enemy, steaming at something between 12 and 15 knots, drew rapidly away till only her topmasts were visible. The *Alcantara* continued to fire at extreme elevation, but the target was obscured by smoke. When the enemy emerged from it the *Alcantara* fired a few more rounds from her port battery at extreme range, and the raider replied with a few ragged three-gun salvos. At 3.15 p.m. the *Alcantara* was in 24° 10′ S., 31° 51′ W. Firing had ceased except for a few desultory rounds which fell short.

For some time the *Alcantara* had been almost stopped: the raider, after altering course as though to close her, turned round and steamed away at 15 knots with a slight list to port. When last seen at 3.30 p.m. she was steering south, 29,000 yards away. Thus ended a sharp but inconclusive action, during which the *Alcantara* had fired 152 rounds.

A close examination of the effects of the enemy's fire showed that she had used only shrapnel or similar "anti-personnel" shell throughout. Some had burst in the air and eight others instantaneously on impact. Their fragmentation was very great and as many as 500 perforations and dents were found near one burst. The danger to personnel was obvious, and the *Alcantara's* reports* contain the following recommendations:—

(1) Gun shields to be fitted to all guns, not only as protection, but also to shield the sight-setters from blast.

(2) Fire control circuits to be run below decks and given greater protection.

(3) Steel helmets to be provided for all whose duty may require them to be in an exposed place.

(4) Telemotor leads to be further protected.

(5) Protection for ammunition bollard and operator.

(6) Further supply of protective mattresses for bridge, fore control and elsewhere.

(7) The 6-in., Mark VII guns with their 14,000 yards range, which had been outranged by the enemy raider, to be replaced by 6-in., Mark XII, or other suitable long range guns.†

* M.018572/40. A full list of recommendations is in M.021171/40.

† The *Alcantara* was subsequently rearmed with two 6-in. guns, range 18,500 yards, and six 6-in. guns, range 17,700 yards.

Everything possible was done by the *Alcantara* to force the action, and it can only be ascribed to the fortune of war that an unlucky hit in the engine room reduced her speed and enabled the raider to escape.*

THE "CARNARVON CASTLE'S" ACTION, 5th DECEMBER, 1940

3. On 5th December, 1940, the armed merchant cruiser *Carnarvon Castle*,† Captain H. W. M. Hardy, R.N., fought an action with an enemy raider in the South Atlantic very similar to the *Alcantara's* action of 28th July, 1940. These actions emphasised the heavy handicap under which both vessels laboured owing to their large silhouettes, short range guns, and primitive fire control opposed to smaller adversaries equipped with long range guns and modern fire control systems. While the *Alcantara's* 6-in. guns were outranged by 2,000 yards the *Carnarvon Castle's* guns were outranged by 3,000 yards, which gave her opponent 20 minutes of uninterrupted firing at a large target before she could get within range.

The following summary of the action is based largely on the *Carnarvon Castle's* narrative.‡ At 6.42 a.m. on the morning of 5th December, 1940, H.M.S. *Carnarvon Castle* was in 30° 52′ S., 42° 53′ W., off the east coast of South America,§ steering S.35° W. at 18·3 knots, with orders to arrive at Montevideo on 9th December, when she sighted a suspicious vessel at a range of 19,000 yards, the extreme limit of visibility. The stranger was steaming directly away, and the *Carnarvon Castle*, increasing speed, signalled her to stop. She did not do so, and at 7.57 a.m. the *Carnarvon Castle* fired one round, which fell short. She replied within 30 seconds at a range of approximately 17,000 yards, with a four- or five-gun salvo. As this was 3,000 yards outside the maximum range of the *Carnarvon Castle's* eight 6-in. guns, Captain Hardy turned to port to close the range and to bring all his starboard battery to bear. The enemy also altered course to port, but soon turned back to starboard.

These changes reduced the range, after 20 minutes, to 14,000 yards, and the *Carnarvon Castle*, opening fire, claims to have hit the enemy several times, setting her on fire aft and apparently reducing her port battery temporarily to one effective gun, with which she continued the action for some time. The enemy then turned to starboard behind a smoke screen, and on reappearing reopened fire with his starboard battery in four-gun salvos.

At 8.38 a.m. the *Carnarvon Castle* sighted two torpedo tracks approaching on slightly diverging courses, but, turning under full helm to starboard, was able to steer between them, and they passed harmlessly 50 yards away on either side.

By 8.44 a.m. the range was down to 8,000 yards when the enemy, bringing his port battery once more to bear, hit the *Carnarvon Castle* repeatedly, setting her on fire in several places. At 9.11 a.m., therefore, Captain Hardy decided to open the range and get the fires under control behind a smoke screen. All the *Carnarvon Castle's* fire control communications were disabled and her guns in individual control. The haze had increased, and as the enemy was continually turning smoke on and off, spotting through the splashes of her shorts became extremely difficult and hitting a matter of luck. The *Carnarvon Castle*, however, claimed a last hit at her extreme range of 14,000 yards, the shell bursting under the enemy's bridge. The raider continued firing until the

* For signals sent by *Alcantara* during the action *see* Appendix A.
† *Carnarvon Castle*, 20,063 gross tons, 18 knots, guns, eight 6-in., 14,000 yards range.
‡ It is not easy to follow the course of the action from the report, as few times are registered and the track chart attached to it is not to scale. *See* Plan 3 and Notes on Plans, page 26.
§ *See* Plan 2.

range had opened to 18,000 yards, and although the *Carnarvon Castle* altered course in an attempt to keep in touch, the enemy finally disappeared behind a smoke screen in the increasing haze, steaming at 18 knots in a north-easterly direction.

It was 11·15 a.m. before the *Carnarvon Castle* was able to extinguish all her fires, and in view of her extensive damage Captain Hardy steered for Montevideo, which he reached safely at 7 p.m. on 7th December. The ship was too damaged to be of any further service, though there was no immediate need to dock her.

The enemy ship was a long, low vessel of about 10,000 tons displacement, painted a very dark grey or black, with two masts, one funnel, straight stem and cruiser stern. As in the *Alcantara's* action the enemy shell showed very high fragmentation, but in this action no shrapnel was used. The *Carnarvon Castle* had received no less than 27 direct hits : all her electrical and voicepipe communications were shot away, her engine-room telegraphs and telephones cut, her wireless aerial destroyed, all her boats, except one, were riddled, her galley completely wrecked, the main exhaust pipe from her engines extensively cut, and her fore peak was flooded. Commodore F. H. Pegram, the Commodore Commanding the South America Division, who visited her the following day, considered that she had put up a gallant and spirited action against a superior enemy.*

THE "LEANDER" SINKS THE "R.A.M.B.1", 27th FEBRUARY, 1941

4. On 27th February, 1941, H.M.S. *Leander*,† New Zealand Division, Captain R. H. Bevan, R.N., fought a successful action in the Indian Ocean with the Italian raider *R.A.M.B.1.*

At 10.37 a.m.‡ on the morning of 27th February, the *Leander* was patrolling northward off the Maldive Islands in about 1° N., 68° 30′ E., at 20 knots, when she sighted a vessel steering eastward on a steady course at a comparatively high speed right ahead : she increased to 23 knots to close, and as she gradually approached, her suspicions were aroused by the stranger's resemblance to the R.A.M.B. class of Italian banana freighters and by a gun on her forecastle. She therefore went to action stations at 11.15 a.m. when the range was 11,000 yards, keeping her turrets trained fore and aft. At 11.25 a.m., when the range was down to 10,000 yards, she ordered§ the stranger to hoist her colours. Four minutes later the stranger hoisted the red ensign. The *Leander* then ordered her to hoist her signal letters, and after a delay of 5 minutes she hoisted GJYD. It was then 11.34 a.m. As these letters did not appear in the "Signal Letters of British Ships" nor in the "Signal Letter Index," the *Leander*, at 11.41 a.m., made the secret challenge, to which there was no reply.

Captain Bevan therefore decided to board, and at 11.45 a.m. ordered the stranger by lamp and flags to stop instantly. She did not reply, but at 11.50 a.m., just as the *Leander* was about to fire across her bows, she hoisted the Italian mercantile ensign‖ and started training her guns.

The *Leander* at once trained her own turrets. She was just before the stranger's beam with the stranger bearing Red 95. At 11.53 a.m., without further warning, the stranger suddenly opened fire, and the *Leander* replied

* M.02910/41 and T.S.D.6133/41.
† *Leander*, cruiser, 7,270 tons, 32·5 knots, guns, eight 6-in., eight 4-in. H.A.
‡ Times are Z—5½.
§ By lamp and flags.
‖ According to Captain Bevan's report in M.07842/41 she hoisted the Italian mercantile ensign, but according to C.-in-C., East Indies, in T.S.D.5459/41, page 10, she hoisted the Italian naval ensign.

It is now known that the Enemy was Raider E (Santa Cruz)
W.I.R. Raider Supplement No 2

immediately with a broadside at 3,000 yards. The enemy's fire was short and erratic. When the *Leander* had fired five rapid salvos Captain Bevan ceased fire and signalled to the enemy " Do you surrender ? " The enemy, who had not fired more than three rounds a gun, was already on fire and abandoning ship. No crews remained at her guns, and she had struck her ensign. She had turned to starboard, and the *Leander*, stopping on her starboard quarter, lowered a boarding boat with orders to save the burning ship if possible. Two lifeboats were leaving the ship, stragglers were jumping overboard and climbing down her sides. An Italian officer in the water warned the boarding boat not to approach the burning ship as it was loaded with ammunition. The boat therefore lay off and watched the fire spread slowly aft until a heavy explosion before the bridge sent flames and smoke shooting high overhead. The raider was lying head to wind, and the fire continued to spread aft until at 12.43 p.m. a very heavy explosion, evidently of the after magazine, sent the stern hurtling into the air. Five minutes later* the raider disappeared in 1° N., 68° 30′ E., leaving only a patch of oil burning on the surface of the sea.

Meanwhile the *Leander* had picked up her boarding boat and 103 Italian survivors,† including the captain of the *R.A.M.B.1*, who stated emphatically that he had not scuttled his ship. Steaming away from the scene of action the *Leander* passed through the floating wreckage. The Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, Vice-Admiral R. Leatham, C.B., considered that the *R.A.M.B.1* might well have become a serious menace to shipping and that the *Leander* was to be commended for ridding the seas of a potential raider before it had time to do any harm.‡ At a range of only 3,000 yards, however, she was perhaps fortunate to escape the fate which befell the Australian cruiser *Sydney* less than nine months later.§

THE "VOLTAIRE," APRIL, 1941

5. Early in April, 1941, the British armed merchant cruiser *Voltaire*,‖ Captain J. A. P. Blackburn, D.S.C., R.N., left Trinidad for Freetown with orders to pass through two areas west of the Cape Verde Islands on the way.

On 5th April the Commander-in-Chief, America and West Indies, Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Kennedy-Purvis, K.C.B., informed the Commander-in-Chief, South Atlantic, Vice-Admiral Sir Robert Raikes, K.C.B., C.V.O., D.S.O., that according to a German communique the *Voltaire* had been sunk by a German cruiser and that he had ordered the Canadian armed merchant cruiser *Prince David* to proceed along her track at her best possible speed. On 11th April Admiral Raikes informed the Admiralty that nothing had been heard of the *Voltaire* though she had been due at Freetown on the 9th.

Late on the 15th the Commander-in-Chief, America and West Indies, informed the Admiralty that the *Prince David* had sighted a patch of very heavy oil covering an area of 3 square miles, together with charred wood, clothes and newspapers in 14° 31′ N., 40° 32′ W., half-way between the West Indies and the Cape Verde Islands, at 2.30 p.m. on 7th April. This was the *Voltaire's* estimated position on the 4th, and the Admiralty considered that it was probably her wreckage that the *Prince David* had sighted. As there were no survivors no details are available of the *Voltaire's* encounter, but it seems possible that like the *Alcantara* and *Carnarvon Castle* she was outranged and,

* That is at 1248Z—5½ 0718 G.M.T.

† One died subsequently.

‡ M.07842/41, the report of the destruction of the *R.A.M.B.*1 does not include a track chart and there are no data available for the construction of a plan.

§ *See* Section 7

‖ *Voltaire*, 13,300 tons, 14·5 knots, guns, eight 6-in., 14,000 yards range.

in view of her slow speed, out-manœuvred also. Nothing is definitely known about her end, nor of the identity of the vessel which destroyed her, though Admiral Raikes states that it was probably the German armed merchant ship raider *Santa Cruz*.*

THE "CORNWALL" SINKS RAIDER No. 33, 8th MAY, 1941

6. On 8th May, 1941, H.M.S. *Cornwall*† fought an action with an enemy raider in the Indian Ocean.

On 7th May at 5.55 a.m.‡ the *Cornwall* was near the equator in 0° 2′ S., 56° 55′ E.,¶ steering 160° at 12 knots with orders to refuel at the Seychelles when a raider report reached her from the S.S. *British Emperor*. Altering course to 340° at 6.25 a.m. she increased to 20 knots to close the enemy's position without an unduly heavy consumption of fuel. As this position was 500 miles away, in 8° 30′ N., 56° 25′ E., she anticipated a prolonged search.

A scheme for the search with the aid of aircraft was worked out on the principle of closing the enemy's " furthest on " line and then starting a Vignot search to cover before dark the largest possible variation of the enemy in speed and course. At 7.56 a.m. the *Cornwall* increased to 24 knots, but at 8.15 a.m., on receipt of a signal‖ from the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, Vice-Admiral R. Leatham, turned north at 25½ knots to cover the gap between the Seychelles and the islands of the Chagos Archipelago to the eastward.

As Admiral Leatham was unaware of her exact position, the *Cornwall* decided to regard his signal as an instruction and to proceed with her own original scheme of search as the most practical manner of complying with it.

The scheme and the *Cornwall's* movements can best be followed by referring to the attached plan¶ and to the record of the courses she steered.** The search before dark was designed to cover the raider's courses between 144° and 190° and speeds between 13·4 and 16·6 knots.

Between 4 p.m. and 4.15 p.m. the *Cornwall* launched both her aircraft, recovering them shortly after 7 p.m. At 7 p.m. she altered course N. 15° E. to get on to the line of the main Vignot search. This was made out for a mean speed of 13 knots from one hour after the time of the raider report, on the assumption that the raider would require an hour to deal with the *British Emperor* and would then steam at high speed until dark, when she would ease down. At 9.30 p.m. the *Cornwall* altered course to 113° and reduced to 16½ knots to search on this line while the moon was up.

The direction of search was correct, but the search was unsuccessful for, though by 3.30 a.m. next morning, 8th May, the *Cornwall* was close to the enemy, who claims to have sighted†† her as she turned against the setting moon, several hours were to pass before she herself sighted the raider. From 3.30 a.m.

" It is now known that H.M.S. ' Voltaire ' was sunk by Raider E (Santa Cruz), the raider engaged by the ' Carnarvon Castle ' on 5th December, 1940. According to repatriated prisoners of war, the enemy, which was small and very fast, opened fire at very long range. Her first salvo crippled the ' Voltaire,' which sank after three hours' continuous shelling. A number of survivors were picked up by the raider. *See* W.I.R., Raider Supplements, Nos. 2 and 3, and N.I.D. 09133/43."

5465/41.

¶ Plan 4.

** In Appendix B.

†† Or possibly detected her by R.D.F. *See* Plan 4.

immediately with a broadside at 3,000 yards. The enemy's fire was short and erratic. When the *Leander* had fired five rapid salvos Captain Bevan ceased fire and signalled to the enemy " Do you surrender ? " The enemy, who had not fired more than three rounds a gun, was already on fire and abandoning ship. No crews remained at her guns, and she had struck her ensign. She had turned to starboard, and the *Leander*, stopping on her starboard quarter, lowered a boarding boat with orders to save the burning ship if possible. Two lifeboats were leaving the ship, stragglers were jumping overboard and climbing down her sides. An Italian officer in the water warned the boarding boat not to approach the burning ship as it was loaded with ammunition. The boat therefore lay off and watched the fire spread slowly aft until a heavy explosion before the bridge sent flames and smoke shooting high overhead. The raider was lying head to wind, and the fire continued to spread aft until at 12.43 p.m. a very heavy explosion, evidently of the after magazine, sent the stern hurtling into the air. Five minutes later* the raider disappeared in 1° N., 68° 30′ E., leaving only a patch of oil burning on the surface of the sea.

Meanwhile the *Leander* had picked up her boarding boat and 103 Italian survivors,† including the captain of the *R.A.M.B.1*, who stated emphatically that he had not scuttled his ship. Steaming away from the scene of action the *Leander* passed through the floating wreckage. The Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, Vice-Admiral R. Leatham, C.B., considered that the *R.A.M.B.1* might well have become a serious menace to shipping and that the *Leander* was to be commended for ridding the seas of a potential raider before it had time to do any harm.‡ At a range of only 3,000 yards, however, she was perhaps fortunate to escape the fate which befell the Australian cruiser *Sydney* less than nine months later.§

THE "VOLTAIRE," APRIL, 1941

5. Early in April, 1941, the British armed merchant cruiser *Voltaire*,‖ Captain J. A. P. Blackburn, D.S.C., R.N., left Trinidad for Freetown with orders to pass through two areas west of the Cape Verde Islands on the way.

On 5th April the Commander-in-Chief, America and West Indies, Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Kennedy-Purvis, K.C.B., informed the Commander-in-Chief, South Atlantic, Vice-Admiral Sir Robert Raikes, K.C.B., C.V.O., D.S.O., that according to a German communique the *Voltaire* had been sunk by a German cruiser and that he had ordered the Canadian armed merchant cruiser *Prince David* to proceed along her track at her best possible speed. On 11th April Admiral Raikes informed the Admiralty that nothing had been heard of the *Voltaire* though she had been due at Freetown on the 9th.

Late on the 15th the Commander-in-Chief, America and West Indies, informed the Admiralty that the *Prince David* had sighted a patch of very heavy oil covering an area of 3 square miles, together with charred wood, clothes and newspapers in 14° 31′ N., 40° 32′ W., half-way between the West Indies and the Cape Verde Islands, at 2.30 p.m. on 7th April. This was the *Voltaire's* estimated position on the 4th, and the Admiralty considered that it was probably her wreckage that the *Prince David* had sighted. As there were no survivors no details are available of the *Voltaire's* encounter, but it seems possible that like the *Alcantara* and *Carnarvon Castle* she was outranged

* That is at 1248Z—5½ 0718 G.M.T.
† One died subsequently.
‡ M.07842/41, the report of the destruction of the
chart and there are no data available for the
§ *See* Section 7
‖ *Voltaire*, 13,300 tons, 14·5

in view of her slow speed, out-manœuvred also. Nothing is definitely known about her end, nor of the identity of the vessel which destroyed her, though Admiral Raikes states that it was probably the German armed merchant ship raider *Santa Cruz*.*

THE "CORNWALL" SINKS RAIDER No. 33, 8th MAY, 1941

6. On 8th May, 1941, H.M.S. *Cornwall*† fought an action with an enemy raider in the Indian Ocean.

On 7th May at 5.55 a.m.‡ the *Cornwall* was near the equator in 0° 2′ S., 56° 55′ E.,¶ steering 160° at 12 knots with orders to refuel at the Seychelles when a raider report reached her from the S.S. *British Emperor*. Altering course to 340° at 6.25 a.m. she increased to 20 knots to close the enemy's position without an unduly heavy consumption of fuel. As this position was 500 miles away, in 8° 30′ N., 56° 25′ E., she anticipated a prolonged search.

A scheme for the search with the aid of aircraft was worked out on the principle of closing the enemy's " furthest on " line and then starting a Vignot search to cover before dark the largest possible variation of the enemy in speed and course. At 7.56 a.m. the *Cornwall* increased to 24 knots, but at 8.15 a.m., on receipt of a signal‖ from the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, Vice-Admiral R. Leatham, turned north at 25½ knots to cover the gap between the Seychelles and the islands of the Chagos Archipelago to the eastward.

As Admiral Leatham was unaware of her exact position, the *Cornwall* decided to regard his signal as an instruction and to proceed with her own original scheme of search as the most practical manner of complying with it.

The scheme and the *Cornwall's* movements can best be followed by referring to the attached plan¶ and to the record of the courses she steered.** The search before dark was designed to cover the raider's courses between 144° and 190° and speeds between 13·4 and 16·6 knots.

Between 4 p.m. and 4.15 p.m. the *Cornwall* launched both her aircraft, recovering them shortly after 7 p.m. At 7 p.m. she altered course N. 15° E. to get on to the line of the main Vignot search. This was made out for a mean speed of 13 knots from one hour after the time of the raider report, on the assumption that the raider would require an hour to deal with the *British Emperor* and would then steam at high speed until dark, when she would ease down. At 9.30 p.m. the *Cornwall* altered course to 113° and reduced to 16½ knots to search on this line while the moon was up.

The direction of search was correct, but the search was unsuccessful for, though by 3.30 a.m. next morning, 8th May, the *Cornwall* was close to the enemy, who claims to have sighted†† her as she turned against the setting moon, several hours were to pass before she herself sighted the raider. From 3.30 a.m.

* T.S.D. 6136, War Diary, C.-in-C., South Atlantic, April, 1941.
† *Cornwall*, cruiser, 10,000 tons, 31·5 knots, guns, eight 8-in., eight 4-in. H.A.
‡ Times are Zone—5.
‖ According to *Cornwall's* report (M.012944/41) " on receipt of the C.-in-C., East Indies, 0546Z/7 May." Note that 0546Z in C.-in-C.'s signal (Greenwich time) is 1046 in *Cornwall's* time (Z—5), but according to *Cornwall's* deck log the *Cornwall* increased to 24 knots at 0756 and to 25½ knots at 0815, more than two hours *before* the C.-in-C. made the signal. Time of receipt and text of signal are not given in M.012944/41 nor in T.S.D. 5465/41.
¶ Plan 4.
** In Appendix B.
†† Or possibly detected her by R.D.F. *See* Plan 4.

until dawn the *Cornwall* steered 143° at 13 knots. At dawn, between 6.30 and 7 a.m., she launched both aircraft to cover a variation of 3 knots on either side of the enemy's estimated speed; and at 6.35 a.m. increased to 18 knots.

At 7.7 a.m. one of the aircraft sighted a merchant ship of the suspected type steaming about 13 knots, 228°, some 65 miles westward of the *Cornwall*, but made no report before returning about 8 a.m. At 8.25 a.m. the *Cornwall* altered course to 255° to close the suspect and increased speed, at first to 20 knots and then, at 8.34 a.m., to 23 knots. It was about 9.30 a.m. when she recovered her aircraft. Though she hoped that it had not been sighted, later information proved that it had been detected, probably by R.D.F. On this as on all other occasions the aircraft approached and left the suspicious ship in the direction away from the cruiser, a ruse apparently successful in hiding the cruiser's actual position.

At 10.15 a.m. the *Cornwall* catapulted her second aircraft with instructions to close the still unidentified ship and discover, if possible, whether she were a raider or not. When the aircraft returned at 12.23 p.m. it reported that the unknown vessel was steaming at least 15 knots and had hoisted signal letters. These were identified as those of the Norwegian S.S. *Tamerlane*, which she closely resembled, though the *Tamerlane* was not in the *Cornwall's* list of expected ships.

It was then past noon and it was clear that the *Cornwall* must increase speed to get within striking distance of the suspect with plenty of daylight in hand. She accordingly increased to 26 knots and at 1 p.m. to 28 knots. At 1.45 p.m. she catapulted an aircraft with orders to keep her informed of the bearing, course, and speed of the still unidentified vessel. She estimated the suspect to be within 32 miles unless he had altered course. When the aircraft returned it was able to give an accurate bearing of the unknown ship which was in sight from the air, and a few minutes later, at 4.7 p.m., was sighted from the bridge of the *Cornwall*, bearing 282°, Green 50.

At 4.12 p.m. the *Cornwall* altered course to close, but the stranger turned away, stern on, steering 300°. At 4.19 p.m., therefore, the *Cornwall* altered course to bring her fine on the starboard bow in order to close as quickly as possible to 12,000 yards without crossing her track. At 4.30 p.m. the stranger began making "Raider reports," stating that she was the Norwegian S.S. *Tamerlane*. The plane in the air was therefore told to inform her that the ship chasing her was a British cruiser and that she should stop engines. The *Cornwall* turned at the same time to give her a good broadside view, and then resumed the chase.

At 4.56 p.m., when the range was down to 19,000 yards, the *Cornwall* signalled three times "Heave to or I fire," and backed this up with one warning round of 8-in. over and to the left, but though the stranger disobeyed the order, the *Cornwall* refrained from opening direct fire, still thinking that she might be a normal merchant ship whose master was gallantly determined not to stop. An order was therefore given for the second aircraft to take off and drop a 250-lb. bomb close to the suspect, and, if that did not stop her, to drop the other on her forecastle. It was some time, however, before this order reached the aircraft.

At 5.10 p.m. the *Cornwall* again signalled "Heave to or I fire," and followed this with another round of 8-in. As the range was then inside 12,000 yards, she turned to port to open it. This apparently convinced the stranger that the *Cornwall* was about to open fire in earnest, for when the 8-in. shell fell near her she turned to starboard, and then, making a large alteration to port, opened fire with five guns just before 5.15 p.m.*

* According to the *Cornwall's* deck log the *Cornwall* opened fire at 5.15 p.m. This does not agree with her report in M.012944/41.

The enemy could hardly have chosen a better moment for starting the action. Just as the *Cornwall* turned after firing her second warning shot, her training circuit failed. Realising that she was dangerously close to the raider, she immediately turned away to port to the limit of "A" arcs to avoid danger from torpedoes and to open the range, which had closed to 10,500 yards. It opened quickly, but for a time the *Cornwall* was in grave danger. She was frequently straddled by rapid and fairly accurate gunfire while her own main armament was pointing anywhere but at the enemy. In these circumstances she turned further away, and an officer was sent from the bridge with a message to "B" turret to train on the enemy and, if necessary, to take over control of "A" turret. The necessary orders had, however, already been passed from the fore control, and as the turrets trained, the *Cornwall* turned back to starboard to open "A" arcs. As soon as they would bear, "A" and "B" turrets fired two salvos, but a 5·9-in. hit then put her fore steering gear out of action, and she swung away, closing her "A" arcs once again for a short time. The breakdown was fortunately only temporary. The after steering gear was rapidly brought into use and the ship was out of control for a matter of seconds only. Meanwhile, unfortunately, communication between the bridge and the catapult had failed, with the result that, before the order to launch the second aircraft was received, the aircraft was put out of action by a shell splinter.

By 5.18 p.m. all the *Cornwall's* turrets were firing* and her salvos straddling the enemy. The range was again outside 12,000 yards and she was reasonably safe from torpedo attack. The enemy's fire was falling off in accuracy and volume. At 5.19 p.m. it was nearly 1,000 yards short, and the *Cornwall* turned to bring the ships on to roughly parallel courses. By this time she had received two direct hits, but although a minute or two later the raider managed to straddle her she was not hit again. The action was virtually at an end. At 5.26 p.m. a salvo hit the enemy and she blew up,† disappearing in a cloud of white vapour which rose vertically some 2,000 ft. and hung over the scene for many minutes. As she sank she fired an ineffective salvo which straddled the *Cornwall* 20 seconds after she herself had finally disappeared.

Although the *Cornwall* had destroyed the enemy her own troubles were not yet at an end. With one of her two aircraft out of action she was naturally anxious to recover the other before dark. She therefore decided to hoist it in before searching for survivors among the debris, which covered a wide area and which would have been dangerous to the aircraft. As she turned to recover it, however, it was suddenly realised that although an order had been given for speed to be reduced to 12 knots the *Cornwall* was still steaming very fast.‡ She therefore turned to pass to windward of the wreckage, ordering the aircraft to land as best it could. The *Cornwall* gradually stopped and picked it up, but, as the plane was being hoisted in, electric power failed. This breakdown brought all the fans to a standstill, the engine-room temperature rose to 200°, and for a time the engine-room had to be abandoned.§

About this time the *Cornwall's* starboard engines suddenly went half speed astern, presumably in accordance with an order given some time before. This brought her into the middle of the wreckage, and before darkness fell she was able to pick up a number of British and German survivors clinging to it in the water.‖ She remained without electric power from 6.15 p.m. until 6.50 p.m.

* "A" and "B" turrets in quarters and "X" and "Y" in group control.

† In 3° 27′ N., 56° 38′ E.

‡ At 25 knots at least.

§ One engineer officer was fatally overcome by the heat. The failures in the engine-room were the subject of a board of enquiry.

‖ 9 British, 15 Indian and 60 German survivors were rescued.

At 6.50 p.m. power was restored, but she lay stopped in the wreckage until 9.40 p.m., when, after making temporary repairs, she went ahead and steered once again for the Seychelles.

Although the *Cornwall* had found and sunk the enemy the Admiralty considered that the conduct of the operation left much to be desired. They regarded the scheme of search as well designed, but when, at 7.7 a.m., her aircraft sighted a merchant ship of the type for which it was searching, it should have reported the fact at once instead of waiting until its return to the ship at 8 a.m. As a result of this failure to make an immediate report the *Cornwall* continued to steam away from the enemy for nearly an hour, which might have been vital, while her other aircraft was kept unnecessarily in the air.

It was considered, too, that the *Cornwall* should have kept the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, informed of events and of her intentions. With the information at his disposal he could then have informed her that no friendly merchant ship was anywhere near. She appears, however, to have been unduly concerned with the possibility of her wireless being intercepted by the raider's direction finder.

The *Cornwall* was engaged on a definite raider hunt and employing, quite correctly, both aircraft for the search. When the suspicious ship was sighted by one of them it could have shadowed her while the other was recalled and refuelled in readiness to relieve the shadower, thus ensuring that the suspect would be almost constantly under observation. As it was the advantage of having two aircraft was lost* and the enemy was left unwatched from 7.25 a.m. until 11.25 a.m., and again from 11.50 a.m. until 2.10 p.m. If he had made a big alteration of course, or if the visibility had drastically decreased, the chance of finding him again would have been slender.

The Admiralty considered that during this phase the rigid adherence to wireless silence resulted in essential reports not being made from the aircraft to the *Cornwall* when the signal letters were hoisted by the suspect, and from the *Cornwall* to the Commander-in-Chief when these had been identified as the *Tamerlane's*. In view of the nature of the operation and the obvious importance of making contact with the suspicious ship as quickly as possible, the Admiralty considered, too, that the *Cornwall* should have brought all her boilers to immediate notice at 8 a.m., the time of the aircraft's first report, instead of waiting until 12.50 p.m. when the report of the second sighting reached her.

Throughout the period between the surface sighting of the raider and the time when she opened fire the *Cornwall* held on to the idea that the suspect might still prove to be a friendly neutral although in view of her suspicious behaviour all the evidence was very much against it. The Admiralty considered that the *Cornwall*, by allowing herself to close to a range of under 12,000 yards contrary to her expressed intentions, showed a lack of attention to the changing situation. It is quite clear from her report† that this was fully appreciated at the time. The error of closing a very suspicious ship was intensified by her temporary inability to open fire, which left no alternative but to turn away and close "A" arcs at a critical moment, which might easily have resulted in the raider's escape and in much more serious damage to herself than she actually suffered.‡

* Owing to the shortage of Fleet Air Arm personnel the *Cornwall* had no qualified observer for her second aircraft.

† In M.012944/41.

‡ An Admiralty message re *Cornwall's* action, dated 16th December, 1941, is in Appendix D.

THE "SYDNEY'S" ACTION, 19th NOVEMBER, 1941

7. On 19th November, 1941, H.M.A.S. *Sydney*,* Captain Joseph Burnett, R.A.N., sank the enemy raider *Kormoran* off the west coast of Australia. As the *Sydney* was herself destroyed with all hands in the encounter this account is based on the only available report of the action, that of the German survivors.†

On 11th November, 1941, the *Sydney* left Fremantle escorting the S.S. *Zealandia*, and handed her over to H.M.S. *Durban* in 7° 56′ S., 104° 40′ E., on the 17th. She signalled that she expected to arrive back at Fremantle on 20th November, but, early on the 21st the District Naval Officer, Western Australia, reported that she had not arrived, and followed this on the 23rd with a signal that no further word had been received from her. At 10.54 a.m. on the 23rd the Australian Naval Board instructed her to report her expected time of arrival at Fremantle, and an hour later all high power wireless stations were ordered to call her continuously. There was no reply, and an air search on 24th November gave an equally negative result.

At 8.16 that morning, 24th November, however, a report came in by wireless from the tanker *Trocas* that she had picked up 25 Germans from a raft in 26° 6′ S., 111° 40′ E. Eventually 103 survivors from the *Kormoran* came ashore in two boats at Carnarvon, Western Australia,‡ the S.S. *Koolinda* picked up a boat with 31 more, the *Aquitania* rescued 26, and H.M.A.S. *Yandra* picked up two Chinese who had been captured from the S.S. *Eurylochus* when the *Kormoran* sank her in 8° 15′ N., 25° 14′ W., on 29th January,§ and 70 Germans, a total of 315 Germans and two Chinese.

The story of the action between the *Sydney* and the *Kormoran* was told by the *Kormoran's* captain, Fregatten-Kapitän A. G. T. Detmers and other prisoners, and bears all the marks of a bonafide account. They could not explain why the *Sydney* came so close before opening fire or attempting to launch her aircraft, but it will be recalled that on 27th February, 1941, the *Leander* closed to within 3,000 yards of the *R.A.M.B.1* before either ship opened fire.‖

About 4 p.m.¶ on 19th November the *Kormoran* was in 26° S., 111° E., steaming northwards at 10 knots** when she sighted what appeared to be a sail fine on the starboard bow. Commander Detmers soon identified it as a cruiser and immediately turned west into the sun and increased to full speed, which he estimated at 15 knots. The cruiser, which proved to be the *Sydney*, at once turned and came up on the *Kormoran's* starboard quarter at high speed. For half an hour, as she approached, she repeatedly signalled NNJ, but Commander Detmers had no idea what NNJ meant and did not reply.†† Meanwhile the *Kormoran* was busily making the "Disguised raider in sight" signal, "QQQQ 26 S, 111 E, STRAAT MALAKKA," and it may be noted that about 10 a.m.‡‡ G.M.T. on 19th November the tug *Uco* picked up a QQ message, but was unable to read the position and ship's name.

When the range had closed to 7 miles the *Sydney* ordered the *Kormoran* in plain language to hoist her signal letters and the raider hoisted PKQJ, the letters of the S.S *Straat Malakka*, on her triatic stay between the funnel and

* *Sydney*, Australian cruiser, 6,830 tons, 32½ knots, guns, eight 6-in., four 4-in. H.A.

† In M.05540/42.

‡ *See* Plan 5.

§ *See* Appendix C.

‖ Section 3. 4

¶ This and all the times following are Z—7.

** At 14 knots according to Sub-Lieutenant Bunjes.

†† NNJ means "You should make your signal letters."

‡‡ 5 p.m. Z—7.

foremast where the cruiser could not see them. It is reasonable to suppose that this was a *ruse de guerre* to induce the *Sydney* to close and investigate, for her signal to the *Kormoran* to hoist the letters clear was repeated continuously before the raider complied with it.

The *Sydney* had all guns and tubes trained when she came up with the *Kormoran*. In reply to her signal "Where bound?" the *Kormoran* replied: "Batavia." The *Sydney* then apparently hoisted the letters IK, which the raider was unable to understand as in the International Code they mean "You should prepare for a cyclone, hurricane or typhoon." They were, in fact, the second and third letters of the *Straat Malakka's* secret call sign IIKP. The *Sydney* then ordered the *Kormoran* to show her secret letters, and Captain Detmers not knowing how to reply decided reluctantly to fight. The two ships were steaming in a westerly direction at 15 knots on parallel courses, the *Sydney* on the *Kormoran's* starboard beam. Only a mile* separated them when the *Kormoran* suddenly dropped her gun screens and, hoisting the German ensign, opened fire with four of her six 6-in. guns. Her first salvo hit the cruiser's bridge. The *Sydney* immediately replied with a salvo which went over,† but her second set the raider's fuel tanks on fire. In the meantime the *Kormoran* had hit the *Sydney* with a torpedo which apparently put her forward turrets out of action, and with a salvo which shot her aircraft to pieces at a range so close that the men round it could be plainly seen.‡

About 4.40 p.m. the *Sydney* turned to port and passed so close astern of the *Kormoran* that some of the raider's crew thought that she would ram her. Although an uncontrollable fire was raging in the *Kormoran* all her guns were still in action. The *Sydney's* after turrets, too, were firing, and at 4.50 p.m. she fired four torpedoes which missed the raider ahead and astern. The *Kormoran* replied with a torpedo which also missed its mark. Both ships were now burning fiercely and the *Sydney* was 6 feet down by the bows.

Barely half an hour had passed since the *Kormoran* opened fire, but the action was virtually over. The *Kormoran*, which had fired 450 rounds and three torpedoes, was lying stopped with a fierce fire in her engine-room. The *Sydney*, with all her superstructure smashed and her boats destroyed, was steaming slowly§ away in a south-easterly direction under a dense cloud of smoke. At 11 p.m. Commander Detmers decided to abandon the *Kormoran*, and shortly after midnight an explosion hastened her end. By this time all trace of the *Sydney* had disappeared and she was never seen or heard again.‖

THE "DEVONSHIRE'S" ACTION, 22nd NOVEMBER, 1941

8. On 22nd November, 1941, H.M.S. *Devonshire*,¶ Captain R. D. Oliver, D.S.C., R.N., sank an enemy vessel in the South Atlantic.

At 5.20 a.m. that morning Captain Oliver despatched his Walrus aircraft to carry out an anti-submarine patrol and long range search ahead of the ship. When the Walrus returned at 7.10 a.m. it reported sighting a merchant ship in 4° 20′ S., 18° 50′ W. From the aircraft's description Captain Oliver suspected that the reported vessel might well be an enemy raider and he immediately altered course to close her at 25 knots.

* *See* Plan 5. According to some of the witnesses the range was only 1,200 metres.
† According to one witness the *Sydney's* first salvo hit the *Kormoran* amidships.
‡ The aircraft was warming up when the engagement began.
§ At about 5 knots.
‖ For a brief description of the *Kormoran* and her cruise, *see* Appendix C. An Admiralty message re *Sydney's* action dated 16th December, 1941, is in Appendix D.
¶ *Devonshire*, cruiser, 9,850 tons, 32¼ knots, guns, eight 8-in., eight 4-in. H.A.

An hour later, at 8.9 a.m., the masts of a ship came into sight bearing 160° in 4° 12′ S., 18° 42′ W. There was a moderate breeze* from the south-east and a slight sea with a short slow swell. The visibility was 10 miles. The *Devonshire* at once turned east to fly off her aircraft, which was catapulted at 8.20 a.m. with orders to identify the unknown vessel if possible. By this time Captain Oliver's suspicions were throughly aroused by the manœuvres and appearance of the ship, which closely resembled Raider No. 16, with the exception of moveable fittings such as ventilators and samson posts. He therefore manœuvred the *Devonshire* at 26 knots, and kept her at a range of between 12,000 and 18,000 yards from the unknown ship to frustrate possible torpedo attack.

Page 13. Line 12.

Delete "the stranger turned 32 points....direction" and *substitute* "the stranger turned a complete circle to starboard and, ignoring the 'Devonshire's' signals, made off in a south-easterly direction."

P.310/45.

induce her to abandon ship and avoid unnecessary bloodshed, especially as she probably had a number of British prisoners on board.

The stranger at once stopped and, turning round, transmitted by wireless at 8.40 a.m. the warship raider report; "RRR RRR RRR de *Polyphemus* 4° 20′ S., 18° 35′ W. 0940 G.M.T." It was significant that the "R's" were in groups of three and not of four and that no signal letters were included. Captain Oliver could not ignore the possibility that the ship might be the genuine *Polyphemus*, which was a vessel of similar appearance with a counter stern, and having been reported at Bilbao on 21st September was within reach of his position. To remove all doubts he made a signal to the Commander-in-Chief, South Atlantic, Vice-Admiral A. U. Willis, C.B., D.S.O., at 9.5 a.m., asking if this were the real *Polyphemus*. The aircraft was also asked what type of stern the stranger had and replied at 9.31 a.m. that she had a cruiser stern and a hull similar to the *Atlantis*. All doubts, however, were removed at 9.34 a.m. when the Commander-in-Chief signalled "No, repetition No." One minute later, at 9.35 a.m., the *Devonshire* opened fire at ~~17,000~~ 12,500 yards. Her fourth salvo hit and started a fire which, she reports, eventually spread to the enemy's magazine and blew her up. The enemy put up an efficient smoke screen, but made no attempt to return the *Devonshire's* fire.† By 9.39 a.m. the *Devonshire* had fired 30 salvos, and Captain Oliver checked fire and turned eastward to clear the enemy's smoke screen. He then tried indirect firing by R.D.F. range, but gun blast put the R.D.F. transmitter out of action. At 9.43 a.m. the enemy was visible once more, and according to the aircraft was maintaining a steady 15 knots. The *Devonshire* therefore reopened fire until 9.56 a.m., when the enemy was seen to be heavily on fire and down by the stern. Captain Oliver thought that she had consistently attempted to draw him to the south-eastward, and was determined to steam no further in that direction than he could help. At 10.2 a.m., however, there was a heavy explosion on board her. It was followed by another at 10.14 a.m., and two minutes later she sank.

Captain Oliver's next anxiety was to recover his aircraft, which had a damaged propeller, and he successfully picked it up at 10.40 a.m. It reported that almost certainly an enemy submarine was present. He was therefore unable to stop and rescue survivors, as he could not have done so without running a grave risk of being torpedoed.‡

* Force 4.
† According to *Devonshire's* report the enemy abandoned ship, but she was subsequently reported to be proceeding at 15 knots. It is possible she may have been carrying ammunition supplies for submarines.
‡ SEE Plan 8

foremast where the cruiser could not see them. It is reasonable to suppose that this was a *ruse de guerre* to induce the *Sydney* to close and investigate, for her signal to the *Kormoran* to hoist the letters clear was repeated continuously before the raider complied with it.

The *Sydney* had all guns and tubes trained when she came up with the *Kormoran*. In reply to her signal "Where bound?" the *Kormoran* replied: "Batavia." The *Sydney* then apparently hoisted the letters IK, which the raider was unable to understand as in the International Code they mean "You should prepare for a cyclone, hurricane or typhoon." They were, in fact, the second and third letters of the *Straat Malakka's* secret call sign HKP. The *Sydney* then ordered the *Kormoran* to show her secret letters, and Captain Detmers [illegible] ships *Sydn* the *I* ensign, opened fire with four of her six 6-in. guns. Her first salvo hit the cruiser's bridge. The *Sydney* immediately replied with a salvo which went over,† but her second set the raider's fuel tanks on fire. In the meantime the *Kormoran* had hit the *Sydney* with a torpedo which apparently put her forward turrets out of action, and with a salvo which shot her aircraft to pieces at a range so close that the men round it could be plainly seen.‡

About 4.40 p.m. the *Sydney* turned to port and passed so close astern of the *Kormoran* that some of the raider's crew thought that she would ram her. Although an uncontrollable fire was raging in the *Kormoran* all her guns were still in action. The *Sydney's* after turrets, too, were firing, and at 4.50 p.m. she fired four torpedoes which missed the raider ahead and astern. The *Kormoran* replied with a torpedo which also missed its mark. Both ships were now burning fiercely and the *Sydney* was 6 feet down by the bows.

Barely half an hour had passed since the *Kormoran* opened fire, but the action was virtually over. The *Kormoran*, which had fired 450 rounds and three torpedoes, was lying stopped with a fierce fire in her engine-room. The *Sydney*, with all her superstructure smashed and her boats destroyed, was steaming slowly§ away in a south-easterly direction under a dense cloud of smoke. At 11 p.m. Commander Detmers decided to abandon the *Kormoran*, and shortly after midnight an explosion hastened her end. By this time all trace of the *Sydney* had disappeared and she was never seen or heard again.‖

THE "DEVONSHIRE'S" ACTION, 22nd NOVEMBER, 1941

8. On 22nd November, 1941, H.M.S. *Devonshire*,¶ Captain R. D. Oliver, D.S.C., R.N., sank an enemy vessel in the South Atlantic.

At 5.20 a.m. that morning Captain Oliver despatched his Walrus aircraft to carry out an anti-submarine patrol and long range search ahead of the ship. When the Walrus returned at 7.10 a.m. it reported sighting a merchant ship in 4° 20′ S., 18° 50′ W. From the aircraft's description Captain Oliver suspected that the reported vessel might well be an enemy raider and he immediately altered course to close her at 25 knots.

* *See* Plan 5. According to some of the witnesses the range was only 1,200 metres.
† According to one witness the *Sydney's* first salvo hit the *Kormoran* amidships.
‡ The aircraft was warming up when the engagement began.
§ At about 5 knots.
‖ For a brief description of the *Kormoran* and her cruise, *see* Appendix C. An Admiralty message re *Sydney's* action dated 16th December, 1941, is in Appendix D.
¶ *Devonshire*, cruiser, 9,850 tons, 32¼ knots, guns, eight 8-in., eight 4-in. H.A.

An hour later, at 8.9 a.m., the masts of a ship came into sight bearing 160° in 4° 12′ S., 18° 42′ W. There was a moderate breeze* from the south-east and a slight sea with a short slow swell. The visibility was 10 miles. The *Devonshire* at once turned east to fly off her aircraft, which was catapulted at 8.20 a.m. with orders to identify the unknown vessel if possible. By this time Captain Oliver's suspicions were throughly aroused by the manœuvres and appearance of the ship, which closely resembled Raider No. 16, with the exception of moveable fittings such as ventilators and samson posts. He therefore manœuvred the *Devonshire* at 26 knots, and kept her at a range of between 12,000 and 18,000 yards from the unknown ship to frustrate possible torpedo attack.

Immediately after the *Walrus* had taken off, ~~the stranger turned 32 points to starboard and made off in a south-easterly direction.~~ At 8.37 a.m. the *Devonshire* fired two salvos spread to right and left, intended to provoke a return fire and establish the stranger's identity as a raider beyond doubt, or to induce her to abandon ship and avoid unnecessary bloodshed, especially as she probably had a number of British prisoners on board.

The stranger at once stopped and, turning round, transmitted by wireless at 8.40 a.m. the warship raider report; "RRR RRR RRR de *Polyphemus* 4° 20′ S., 18° 35′ W. 0940 G.M.T." It was significant that the "R's" were in groups of three and not of four and that no signal letters were included. Captain Oliver could not ignore the possibility that the ship might be the genuine *Polyphemus*, which was a vessel of similar appearance with a counter stern, and having been reported at Bilbao on 21st September was within reach of his position. To remove all doubts he made a signal to the Commander-in-Chief, South Atlantic, Vice-Admiral A. U. Willis, C.B., D.S.O., at 9.5 a.m., asking if this were the real *Polyphemus*. The aircraft was also asked what type of stern the stranger had and replied at 9.31 a.m. that she had a cruiser stern and a hull similar to the *Atlantis*. All doubts, however, were removed at 9.34 a.m. when the Commander-in-Chief signalled "No, repetition No." One minute later, at 9.35 a.m., the *Devonshire* opened fire at ~~17,000~~ 12,500 yards. Her fourth salvo hit and started a fire which, she reports, eventually spread to the enemy's magazine and blew her up. The enemy put up an efficient smoke screen, but made no attempt to return the *Devonshire's* fire.† By 9.39 a.m. the *Devonshire* had fired 30 salvos, and Captain Oliver checked fire and turned eastward to clear the enemy's smoke screen. He then tried indirect firing by R.D.F. range, but gun blast put the R.D.F. transmitter out of action. At 9.43 a.m. the enemy was visible once more, and according to the aircraft was maintaining a steady 15 knots. The *Devonshire* therefore reopened fire until 9.56 a.m., when the enemy was seen to be heavily on fire and down by the stern. Captain Oliver thought that she had consistently attempted to draw him to the south-eastward, and was determined to steam no further in that direction than he could help. At 10.2 a.m., however, there was a heavy explosion on board her. It was followed by another at 10.14 a.m., and two minutes later she sank.

Captain Oliver's next anxiety was to recover his aircraft, which had a damaged propeller, and he successfully picked it up at 10.40 a.m. It reported that almost certainly an enemy submarine was present. He was therefore unable to stop and rescue survivors, as he could not have done so without running a grave risk of being torpedoed.‡

* Force 4.
† According to *Devonshire's* report the enemy abandoned ship, but she was subsequently reported to be proceeding at 15 knots. It is possible she may have been carrying ammunition supplies for submarines.
‡ SEE Plan 8

Page 14. Lines 1 to 3.

Delete "Although Captain Oliver .... supply ship" and *substitute* "Captain Oliver had been assisted in identifying the ship by the description of Raider 16 given in a supplement of Weekly Intelligence Report, No. 65, and by a photograph in the American periodical 'Life' of 23rd June, 1941, of a Raider called 'Tamesis' or 'Atlantis.' This was the Hansa ship 'Goldenfels' (Captain Bernhard Rogge), 7,862 tons, which left Kiel in March, 1940, armed with seven 5·9-in. guns. Under various names she had sunk 21 ships. She was acting as a submarine supply ship and was apparently about to fuel a submarine when the 'Devonshire's' aircraft came in sight, obliging the submarine to cast off and dive. After being sunk, her boats laden with survivors were met by submarines and later by the supply ship 'Python' which took a number of them on board."

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V.C., D.S.O., R.N., encountered, ... scuttled herself without opening fire.

The *Dorsetshire* had left Freetown on 26th November to search for enemy ships in the relatively calm area 720 miles south and west of St. Helena. At 7 a.m.‡ on 1st December she flew off her Walrus aircraft in 26° 45′ S., 6° 25′ W., to reconnoitre to the south-east, but it returned without sighting anything. At 11 a.m. the *Dorsetshire* altered course to 111° and increased to 18½ knots. At 3.15 p.m. the Walrus set out again on a similar patrol with orders to search to the southward for an hour and then at right angles to the *Dorsetshire's* mean line of advance for another hour before rejoining the ship.

At 4.33 p.m.§ the *Dorsetshire* sighted the masts of a ship bearing 032°, about 18 miles away at the extreme limit of visibility.‖ The sea was calm with a slight swell. Although the Walrus was still out of sight to the southward, Captain Agar decided to close the unknown vessel at once and if necessary to recall the aircraft. He therefore turned to 031° and increased to 25 knots. The stranger soon began making smoke, but remained hull down. She had apparently increased to full speed on sighting the *Dorsetshire*, and was steering away from her. Captain Agar therefore increased to 30 knots and made a recall, which failed to reach the Walrus.

At 5.8 p.m. the *Dorsetshire* sighted several small patches of oil on the water, and Captain Agar, suspecting the presence of an enemy submarine, turned away to starboard. About this time he sighted an object resembling a submarine's conning tower 6 miles away on the port bow, but at 5.20 p.m. identified it as a power-boat with four or five other boats in tow. Although he could not entirely reject the possibility that the vessel he was chasing was a British ship which had mistaken the *Dorsetshire* for an enemy cruiser he assumed that she was an enemy raider or supply ship. To reduce the risk of attack by a submarine he kept the *Dorsetshire* moving at high speed outside a range of 16,000 yards. In these circumstances he could neither prevent the enemy from scuttling herself nor could he capture her. At 5.31 p.m. he fired two warning shots at 24,000 yards,¶ one right and one left of the target. By this time the enemy had stopped and was lowering boats.** He therefore withheld his fire in case she had any captured British merchant seamen on board, and continued zig-zagging outside her range, but inside his own.

By 5.44 p.m. the *Dorsetshire* had crossed the enemy's bows,†† and although the range was 17,000 yards, Captain Agar was able to see the boats moving away from her side. At 5.51 p.m. he observed that the enemy, who had a definite list to port, was on fire. The fire spread rapidly until 6.5 p.m., when a large explosion forward settled her fate. It was evident that the enemy's self destruction was certain and Captain Agar at once turned away to clear the

* *See* end of Section 9. An Admiralty message re *Devonshire's* action, dated 16th December, 1941, is in Appendix D.

† *Dorsetshire*, cruiser, 9,975 tons, 32¼ knots, guns, eight 8-in. and eight 4-in. H.A.

‡ Times are Z—1.

§ From *Dorsetshire's* deck log.

‖ *See* Plan 6.

¶ From "B" turret.

** At 5.30 p.m. The order to fire was given at 5.28 p.m.

†† The enemy had turned to starboard before stopping.

area as quickly as possible. At 6.21 p.m. the enemy sank in 27° 50′ S., 3° 55′ W.,* leaving only a trail of smoke and a number of survivors in boats. At 7.10 p.m. the *Dorsetshire* recovered her Walrus aircraft, and Captain Agar despatched it again at 7.35 p.m. to reconnoitre the area of the boats.

In the failing light observation was difficult, but as the aircraft circled round at a height of 400 ft. it was able to establish that there were fourteen boats and two large rafts in the position where the ship had gone down. It estimated that each boat contained at least 25 survivors and that the total number of survivors was 500. The Walrus then examined the boats which the *Dorsetshire* had sighted at 5.8 p.m. They were still 4 or 5 miles from the survivors' boats and were fully loaded with packages and crates. It appears possible that they were actually transferring these stores to a submarine when the *Dorsetshire* arrived, but if so the aircraft saw nothing of it.

~~The Captain's and Dorsetshire's actions added to anti-raider tactics a~~

Page 15. Lines 14 to 24.

Delete "The 'Devonshire's' and 'Dorsetshire's' actions .... most difficult problem" (and second footnote) and *substitute* "The ship sunk by the 'Dorsetshire' was the submarine supply ship 'Python,' a motor vessel of 3,664 tons, which after meeting 'U 126' on 23rd November, had taken on board some of the crew of Raider C* and then proceeded south-eastward to refuel another submarine. It has been stated by a survivor that two submarines were in the vicinity when the 'Dorsetshire' engaged her and that one of them fired a torpedo which missed. The sinking of the 'Goldenfels' and 'Python' by the 'Devonshire' and 'Dorsetshire' had an important result, perhaps not fully realized at the time. It brought to a sudden stop a submarine campaign which was developing in the South Atlantic and postponed any renewal of it in that area for nearly a year.

* Sunk by the 'Devonshire.' *See* Section 8."

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RAIDER HUNT, 4th–6th NOVEMBER, 1941

10. In addition to the eight actions against enemy raiders and suspected raiders, fought during 1940 and 1941, there have been a number of cases in 1942 when enemy vessels were encountered but not identified as such. There was also at least one instance in 1941 of a raider report leading to a protracted search when no enemy armed raider was present.

On 4th November, 1941, the R.F.A. oiler *Olwen* reported a surface raider attack at 5.30 a.m. G.M.T. in 3° 4′ N., 22° 42′ W.‡ The *Dorsetshire* was at sea, and the Commander-in-Chief, South Atlantic, Vice-Admiral A. U. Willis, after ordering her to investigate, instructed the cruiser *Dunedin* to leave Freetown with the special service vessels *Queen Emma* and *Princess Beatrix* and join in the search.

When the *Dorsetshire*, Captain A. W. S. Agar, intercepted the *Olwen's* raider distress signal at 6 a.m. she turned east immediately to close the position, which was 600 miles away, and at 6.45 a.m. increased to 20 knots, the maximum speed of the armed merchant cruiser *Canton* which was with her. Captain Agar knew that the U.S. cruiser *Omaha* and U.S. destroyer *Somers*, being well to the north-west of the enemy's reported position, would be able to support the *Canton*, and ordered her at 7.45 a.m. to make for a position in 5° N., 27° 30′ W., to intercept the raider should she steer a north-westerly course, while the *Dorsetshire* steamed south-east at 24 knots to intercept her to the southward. He was unaware that the U.S. cruiser *Memphis* was near the position given by the *Olwen*.

Admiral Willis, not knowing that the *Dorsetshire* and *Canton* had parted company, ordered them at 9.31 a.m. to search a sector to the southward of the

* Approximate position, from track chart in M.0799/42.

~~† M.0799/42 and *Dorsetshire's* deck log.~~

‡ *See* Plan 7.

Although Captain Oliver had suspected that the enemy vessel might [illegible] a raider there is no real evidence to show that she was armed, and it seems [illegible] probable that she was acting as a submarine supply ship.*

THE "DORSETSHIRE'S" ACTION, 1st DECEMBER, 1941

9. On 1st December, 1941, H.M.S. *Dorsetshire*.† Captain A. W. S. Agar, V.C., D.S.O., R.N., encountered, in the South Atlantic, an enemy vessel which scuttled herself without opening fire.

The *Dorsetshire* had left Freetown on 26th November to search for enemy ships in the relatively calm area 720 miles south and west of St. Helena. At 7 a.m.‡ on 1st December she flew off her Walrus aircraft in 26° 45′ S., 6° 25′ W., to reconnoitre to the south-east, but it returned without sighting anything. At 11 a.m. the *Dorsetshire* altered course to 111° and increased to 18½ knots. At 3.15 p.m. the Walrus set out again on a similar patrol with orders to search to the southward for an hour and then [illegible]

[illegible]

At 5.0 p.m. the *Dorsetshire* sighted several small patches of oil on the water, and Captain Agar, suspecting the presence of an enemy submarine, turned away to starboard. About this time he sighted an object resembling a submarine's conning tower 6 miles away on the port bow, but at 5.20 p.m. identified it as a power-boat with four or five other boats in tow. Although he could not entirely reject the possibility that the vessel he was chasing was a British ship which had mistaken the *Dorsetshire* for an enemy cruiser he assumed that she was an enemy raider or supply ship. To reduce the risk of attack by a submarine he kept the *Dorsetshire* moving at high speed outside a range of 16,000 yards. In these circumstances he could neither prevent the enemy from scuttling herself nor could he capture her. At 5.31 p.m. he fired two warning shots at 24,000 yards,¶ one right and one left of the target. By this time the enemy had stopped and was lowering boats.** He therefore withheld his fire in case she had any captured British merchant seamen on board, and continued zig-zagging outside her range, but inside his own.

By 5.44 p.m. the *Dorsetshire* had crossed the enemy's bows,†† and although the range was 17,000 yards, Captain Agar was able to see the boats moving away from her side. At 5.51 p.m. he observed that the enemy, who had a definite list to port, was on fire. The fire spread rapidly until 6.5 p.m., when a large explosion forward settled her fate. It was evident that the enemy's self destruction was certain and Captain Agar at once turned away to clear the

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§ From *Dorsetshire's* deck log.

‖ *See* Plan 6.

¶ From "B" turret.

** At 5.30 p.m. The order to fire was given at 5.28 p.m.

†† The enemy had turned to starboard before stopping.

survivors was 500. The Walrus [illegible] had sighted at 5.8 p.m. They were still 4 or 5 miles from the [illegible] and were fully loaded with packages and crates. It appears possible that they were actually transferring these stores to a submarine when the *Dorsetshire* arrived, but if so the aircraft saw nothing of it.

The *Devonshire's* and *Dorsetshire's* actions added to anti-raider tactics a problem in addition to the usual one of distinguishing friend from foe, namely, that of distinguishing between an enemy supply ship and a raider. The problem of dealing with enemy raiders hinges largely on rapid identification as such, but in neither of these cases was there any real evidence that the enemy vessel was a raider. The fact that neither opened fire nor attempted to entice the cruisers within torpedo range appears to show that they were unarmed. Captain Agar suspected that the enemy was acting as a submarine supply ship, a duty never performed by raiders in the last war, nor, as far as is known, in this one. By scuttling herself she made her identification as a raider unnecessary, which solved the *Dorsetshire's* most difficult problem.†

RAIDER HUNT, 4th–6th NOVEMBER, 1941

10. In addition to the eight actions against enemy raiders and suspected raiders, fought during 1940 and 1941, there have been a number of cases in 1942 when enemy vessels were encountered but not identified as such. There was also at least one instance in 1941 of a raider report leading to a protracted search when no enemy armed raider was present.

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Admiral Willis, not knowing that the *Dorsetshire* and *Canton* had parted company, ordered them at 9.31 a.m. to search a sector to the southward of the

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* Approximate position, from track chart in M.0799/42.

† M.0799/42 and *Dorsetshire's* deck log.

‡ *See* Plan 7.

enemy's reported position* and the *Dunedin, Queen Emma* and *Princess Beatrix* to search a sector to the south-eastward of it.

At 3 p.m. on 5th November Admiral Willis informed the British ships that the U.S. cruiser *Memphis* and the U.S. destroyers *Davis* and *Jouett* had searched the position of the attack without result until 7 p.m. on the 4th. He added that the U.S. cruiser *Omaha* and the U.S. destroyer *Somers* were searching for survivors before proceeding to a position in 5° S., 34° W. That evening, at 6 p.m., he signalled that if nothing further were heard of the raider by dusk on 6th November the *Dorsetshire* and *Canton* were to search on a northerly course between 26° 30′ W. and 30° W. to 2° N. The *Dorsetshire* would then return to Freetown, but the *Canton* would continue on patrol. The *Dunedin, Queen Emma* and *Princess Beatrix* were to search on a northerly course to 5° N. before returning to Freetown.

Next morning, 6th November, a new light was shed upon the situation. At 10.30 a.m. the *Olwen* reported that the raider signal had been made when an unseen enemy, probably a submarine on the surface, had fired on her in the dawn light. At 11.33 a.m. Admiral Willis informed the *Dorsetshire, Canton* and *Dunedin* that as the attack had certainly not been made by a raider they were to act forthwith on his signal of 6 p.m. on 5th November. No fewer than ten British and American warships had searched for two days for a raider with no actual existence. The search, however, was not fruitless, for at 8.45 a.m. on 6th November the *Omaha* and *Somers* captured the German supply ship *Odenwald* in 0° 35′ N., 27° 45′ W., and took her into an American port.†

ENEMY VESSELS SIGHTED BUT NOT ENGAGED, 1942

11. On 13th March, 1942, at 7.25 p.m.,‡ H.M.S. *Durban*, steaming 257°, on passage from Durban to Simonstown, at 13 knots with one engine broken down, sighted a ship in 33° 53′ S., 20° E., steering east at 10 knots, 11 miles ahead. As the stranger would pass fairly close the cruiser maintained her own course and speed, and at a distance of 6 miles signalled NNJ§, using a red Aldis lamp in the failing light. The absence of any reply being not unusual‖ the *Durban* then asked "What ship?" using a white Aldis lamp. The stranger replied that she was the *Levernbank*, bound from New York to Durban, and wished the cruiser good-night. Her silhouette corresponded to that of a Bank Line ship.

The weather was too rough for boarding, and the *Durban*, facing the familiar difficulty of identifying a ship in poor light without closing to a dangerously short range, allowed the stranger to proceed. There can be little doubt, however, that the unknown ship was the ex-British ship *Speybank*, captured by the Germans in January, 1941, and probably acting as an enemy minelaying raider.¶

At 11.30 a.m. next day, 14th March, 1942, a bare sixteen hours after the *Durban* had allowed the spurious *Levernbank* to proceed unmolested, the armed merchant cruiser *Cheshire* was in 38° 11′ S., 20° 10′ E., 258 miles away to

* *See* Plan 7.

† T.S.D. 6145/42, War Diary, C.-in-C., South Atlantic, November, 1941, and M.-019371/41 *Dorsetshire* and *Canton* R. of P., 2nd–9th November, 1941.

‡ 5.25 G.M.T.

§ "You should make your secret letters."

‖ According to the *Durban* only 25 per cent. of merchant ships answer the NNJ signal correctly.

¶ For details *see* N.L.11382/42.

the southward, when she sighted an unknown vessel hull down. At 11.50 a.m. she turned to intercept, and the stranger after momentarily altering course towards her turned away. This, being contrary to recognition procedure, was a suspicious manœuvre. Half an hour later, however, the stranger passed the *Cheshire* on an opposite course only 3 miles away. To the *Cheshire's* signal "What ship?" she replied that she was the *Inverbank*, bound from Montevideo to Melbourne, and convinced, from her appearance, that she was a genuine Bank Line vessel, the *Cheshire* allowed her to proceed without further question.

The real *Inverbank*, however, was on passage from Montevideo to Freetown. Though there is no proof that the vessel which falsely assumed her identity was an enemy raider, it seems possible that she was the false *Levernbank* which had deceived the *Durban* 258 miles away on the previous evening.* The Commander-in-Chief, South Atlantic, Vice-Admiral E. C. Tait, C.B., M.V.O., thought that it may have been providential that the *Cheshire* did not make the secret recognition signal. With a possible enemy raider within 7,000 yards, and with her own ship's company quite unprepared and not even at action stations, the result might easily have been the mysterious and regrettable disappearance with all hands of one of His Majesty's valuable armed merchant cruisers†.

Six weeks later, at 8.43 a.m., on 26th April, 1942, a Seafox aircraft, patrolling from the armed merchant cruiser *Pretoria Castle*, sighted an unknown vessel in 1° 17′ N., 24° 34′ W., steering about 287° at 8 knots.

The Seafox had left the *Pretoria Castle* at 6.45 a.m. to carry out a routine reconnaissance with orders to return at 9.15 a.m. The observer was told that so far as was known no ships were in the area, but that he was to return immediately and report any suspicious vessel sighted.

When therefore the unknown steamer came into sight at 8.43 a.m. he ordered the pilot to approach within half a mile and, circling round before coming down for a closer view, called her up on his Aldis lamp. She replied with identification flags GSLD, but he had no means of decoding them nor of discovering her identity. The Seafox made a thorough inspection at close range but saw nothing suspicious. The vessel was of about 5,000 tons, with one funnel, two slightly raked masts, samson posts on fore side of mainmast, one derrick hoisted aft, but no structure on the well decks. She had normal defensive armament, but apparently no A.A. guns. The only unusual features were roundels painted on the hatch covers. At 9.10 a.m. the Seafox turned to rejoin the *Pretoria Castle*, 40 miles away.

When the *Pretoria Castle* failed to sight the aircraft by 9.5 a.m. she called it up and learned that it expected to be back at 9.40 a.m.; but at that hour it was still out of sight. Ten minutes later, however, just as it sighted the ship, the aircraft, running out of petrol, was forced to alight, signalling as it came down "S.O.S. 270°. 5 miles." The *Pretoria Castle* closed, but the distance proved to be 12 and not 5 miles. The sea was choppy with a heavy swell. All attempts to pick the aircraft up failed, and it was not until 12.10 p.m. that the observer could report the unknown ship which had hoisted identification letters GSLD. These belonged to the S.S. *Anglo-Canadian*, but this name was not on the *Pretoria Castle's* shipping plot, and she decided to make a further inspection. The suspect's estimated mean line of advance was roughly parallel to her own course, and to get well ahead she held on at 16 knots until 1.15 p.m. before turning to intercept. Though she anticipated that the suspect would be

* If so she must have covered the distance at an average of 16 knots.

† For details *see* N.L.9560/42.

in sight by 5 p.m., it had not been sighted half an hour later when she turned to 107° to cross the stranger's probable track. At 5.45 p.m. she asked if the *Anglo-Canadian* were in the area only to be told that this ship had arrived at Bombay on 19th April. Further air reconnaissance was impossible as the *Pretoria Castle's* second aircraft was unserviceable, and although she continued to search till well after dark she saw nothing of the suspicious vessel.*

* For details *see* N.L.9557/42.

APPENDIX A*

H.M.S. "ALCANTARA"—W/T MESSAGES† SENT IN ACTION ON 28th JULY, 1940

IMPORTANT :—Commander-in-Chief, S.A., R.A.S.A.D., from *ALCANTARA*.

HAVE SIGHTED SUSPICIOUS MERCHANT SHIP IN POSITION 024° 23′ S., 032° 31′ W., STEERING 040°. I AM CHASING AT MAXIMUM SPEED BUT NOT GAINING. 1328z/28.

(This message was broadcast at 1410 in Naval Cypher using reserved Block Call Sign.)

IMMEDIATE :—Commander-in-Chief, S.A., R.A.S.A.D., from *ALCANTARA*.

MY 1328z. AM ENGAGING ENEMY ARMED MERCHANT SHIP. MY POSITION IS NOW 024° 03′ S, 031° 58′ W. 1500z/28.

(Broadcast at 1506z when main aerial was shot away during repetition. Message was then broadcast on auxiliary W/T at 1551z and at 1608z. Fleet Code.)

IMMEDIATE :—Commander-in-Chief, S.A., R.A.S.A.D., from *ALCANTARA*.

MY 1500z. COURSE AND SPEED OF ENEMY 180°, 15 KNOTS. MY SPEED REDUCED TO 10 KNOTS, HOLED IN ENGINE ROOM. MY POSITION NOW 024° 10′ S., 031° 50′ W. 1555z/28.

(Broadcast on auxiliary W/T 500 kcs., at 1642z and again at 1657z on main W/T using small broadcast aerial. Fleet Code.)

---

* *See* Section 2.

† None of these signals was received by the *Hawkins* which was a thousand miles away at the time.

APPENDIX B*

RECORD OF COURSES STEERED BY H.M.S. "CORNWALL"

Time.	*Altered course to.*	*Speed.*
7th May, 1941		
0625	340°	20 knots.
0756		24 knots.
0815	000°	25 knots.
1600	040°	23 knots.
1900	015°	23 knots.
2130	113°	16½ knots.
8th May, 1941		
0330	143°	13 knots.
0600	090°	
0635		18 knots.
0820	258°	
0825	255°	20 knots.
0834		23 knots.
0838	252°	
1230	240°	
1245		26 knots.
1302		28 knots.
1609	250°	
1612	262°	
1619	295°	
1635		29 knots.
1637	240°	
1642	290°	
1651	285°	
1701	320°	
1713	290°	
1716	240°	
1717	260°	
1719	240°	
1722	220°	
1725	250°	
1727	Altered course towards wreckage.	

* *See* Section 6.

APPENDIX C*

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE "KORMORAN" AND HER CRUISE†

According to her survivors the German raider *Kormoran* was the German S.S. *Steiermark*, a vessel of 9,400 tons, with a maximum speed of 18 knots, reduced, at the time of her action with the *Sydney*, to 15 or 16 knots by a foul bottom. At this time she was disguised as the *Straat Malakka* with a black hull, black funnel, and buff superstructure, and was flying the Dutch flag. She had sailed as Raider No. 41 and received the name *Kormoran* at sea.

Her armament was not positively established but it appears to have been six 15-cm. (6-in.) guns, six torpedo tubes, four on deck and two submerged, and two 3·7-cm. A.A. guns. She also carried a number of mines, probably about 200, and one aircraft which, being difficult to hoist out, was not often used. She carried a number of disguises such as a second funnel and additional masts but as she was built on Dutch lines and flew a Dutch flag which for general purposes provided sufficient disguise these, too, were not used.

She left Germany on 4th December, 1940, and steered along the Norwegian coast before passing between Iceland and Greenland and down the Atlantic where she sank the following ships :—

	Tons.		1941.
Antonis (Gr.)	3,729	3° S., 30° W.	13th January.
British Union (Br.)	6,987	26° 36′ N., 30° 15′ W.	18th January.
Afric Star (Br.)	11,900	8° N., 15° W.	28th January.
Eurylochus (Br.)	5,723	8° 15′ N., 25° 14′ W.	29th January.
Agnita (Br.)	3,552	4° N., 23° W.	23rd March.
Craftsman (Br.)	8,022	3° S., 21° W.	9th April.
Nicolaos, D. L. (Gr.)	5,486	20° S., 22° W.	12th April.

On 27th March she captured the tanker *Canadolite*, 11,309 tons, in 15° N., 33° W., and sent her into Bordeaux. She entered the Indian Ocean in May and proceeded to the Bay of Bengal where she sank two vessels on 26th June, 1941, the Yugo-Slav ship *Velebit*, 4,153 tons, and the British ship *Mareeba*, 3,472 tons, in 8° N., 88° E. Her last victim was the Greek S.S. *Stamatios G. Embirikos*, 3,941 tons, which she sank near the Maldive Islands. Including the *Canadolite* she accounted for 68,274 tons of shipping.

* *See* Section 7.

† M. 05540/42.

APPENDIX D *

MOST SECRET **MESSAGE** **1618A/16 December**

Date : 16th December, 1941.

From Admiralty.

Analysis of encounters with enemy merchant raiders by H.M.S. *Cornwall* on 8th May, 1941, in the Indian Ocean ; H.M.A.S. *Sydney* off the West Australian coast on 19th November, 1941 ; and H.M.S. *Devonshire* in the South Atlantic on 22nd November, 1941, brings out following points :—

(*A*) *Recognition :*

(1) *Cornwall's* raider reported herself as S.S. *Tamerlane*, who was not on the station.

(2) *Sydney's* raider replied to a challenge that she was S.S. *Straat Malakka*, who had that day left Beira.

(3) *Devonshire's* raider reported herself as S.S. *Polyphemus* then in New York.

Comment—

(4) Enemy raiders will always disguise themselves and use the appropriate name in any signal whether by an RRRR message on 500 k/cs or the reply to a challenge.

(5) In no case so far has the disguise adopted been such as should have deceived commanding officers had they trusted the negative intelligence that information of the ship's movements had not been reported to them.

(6) Positive information of British, Allied and U.S. merchantmen from Admiralty or Shipping Intelligence Officers is sufficiently accurate, and positive information of neutral vessels by local War Trade Reporting Officers should be sufficiently accurate to enable commanding officers to be kept informed of the position of all non-enemy ships they may meet. Commanders-in-Chief should ensure that their information and plotting organisations can achieve this.

(*B*) *Challenge procedure :*

Merchant ship recognition procedure laid down in Recognition Manual and N.C.S.I. 371 does not appear to have been used. This is now only applicable to red ensign and some Dutch ships, but arrangements are in hand for its extension to U.S. and all Allied shipping.

(*C*) *Tactics :*

There is a possibility that commanding officers under-estimate the offensive power of raiders. They should be warned that enemy raiders are often powerfully armed with guns and torpedoes and if fitted with modern R.D.F. may be able to open fire even at long range with great accuracy.

(*D*) *U-Boats :*

Commanding officers should be warned that all enemy vessels throughout the world may be accompanied by U-Boats and that the merchant vessel's tactics will be designed to lead the British ship towards the U-Boat.

* *See* Sections 6, 7 and 8.

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(The Reference is to the Number of Section)

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Agar, Capt. A. W. S., V.C., D.S.O., R.N. Commanding *Dorsetshire*, sinks enemy supply ship, 1st December, 1941, 9 ; hunts for raider, 4–6th November, 1941, 10.

Agnita (Br. tanker) .. .. .. Sunk by *Kormoran*, 23rd March, 1941, Appendix C.

Aircraft .. .. Incorrect use of, by *Cornwall*, 7–8th May, 1941, 6 ; search for *Sydney*, 24th November, 1941, 7 ; *Sydney's* aircraft shot to pieces, 19th November, 1941, 7 ; *Devonshire's* aircraft reports enemy vessel, 22nd November, 1941, 8 ; *Dorsetshire's* aircraft reconnoitres scene of *Dorsetshire's* action, 1st December, 1941, 9.

Alcantara (a.m.c. 1940) .. .. Action with enemy raider, 28th July, 1940, 2, 3 ; signals in action, 28th July, 1940, Appendix A.

Alcantara (a.m.c. 1916) .. .. Action with *Greif*, 28th February, 1916, 1.

Ammunition, rounds fired .. .. By *Alcantara*, 28th July, 1940, 2 ; by *Kormoran*, 19th November, 1941, 7.

Antonis (Gr. s.s.) .. .. .. Sunk by *Kormoran*, 13th January, 1941, Appendix C.

Aquitania (Br. transport) .. .. Picks up *Kormoran* survivors, November, 1941, 7.

Australian Naval Board .. .. Orders *Sydney* to report, 23rd November, 1941, 7.

Bevan, Capt. R. H., R.N. .. .. Commanding *Leander*, sinks *R.A.M.B.I*, 27th February, 1941, 4.

Blackburn, Capt. J. A. P., D.S.C., R.N. Commanding *Voltaire*, lost with her, about 4th April, 1941, 5.

Board of Enquiry .. .. .. Into *Cornwall's* engine-room failures on 8th May, 1941, 6 footnote.

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British Union (Br. s.s.) .. .. Sunk by *Kormoran*, 18th January, 1941, Appendix C.

Burnett, Capt. Joseph, R.A.N. .. Commanding *Sydney*, lost with her, 19th November, 1941, 7.

Canadolite (Br. tanker) .. .. Sent into Bordeaux by *Kormoran*, 25th March, 1941, Appendix C.

Canton (a.m.c.) .. .. .. Hunts for raider, 4–6th November, 1941, 10.

Carnarvon Castle (a.m.c.) .. .. Action with enemy raider, 5th December, 1940, 3.

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Craftsman (Br. s.s.) .. .. .. Sunk by *Kormoran*, 9th April, 1941, Appendix C.

Davis (U.S. t.b.d.) .. .. .. Searches reported raider position, 4th November, 1941, 10.

Davisian (Br. s.s.) .. .. .. Sunk by raider, 10th July, 1940, 2.

Detmers, Fregatten-Kapitän A. G. T., German Navy. Commanding *Kormoran*, sinks *Sydney*, 19th November, 1941, 7.

Devonshire (cruiser) .. .. .. Sinks enemy supply ship, 22nd November, 1941, 8, 9.

Dorsetshire(cruiser) .. .. .. Sinks enemy supply ship, 1st December, 1941, 9 ; hunts for raider, 4–6th November, 1941, 10.

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Ingham, Capt. S. G. P., R.N. .. .. Commanding *Alcantara*, engages enemy raider, 28th July, 1940, 2.

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Uco (Australian tug) .. .. .. Picks up Q Q message, 19th November, 1941, 7.

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NOTES ON PLANS

PLAN 1

THE "ALCANTARA'S" ACTION
28th JULY, 1940

The diagram in the *Alcantara's* report (M.018572/40) shows the *Alcantara's* track, but not that of the raider. The report gives only the initial bearing of the enemy from the *Alcantara* and it has not been possible to produce a reliable track of his course. The raider's track in Plan 1, while conforming with all the available data, must therefore be regarded merely as a diagram of the enemy's probable movements.

PLANS 2 AND 3

THE "CARNARVON CASTLE'S" ACTION
5th DECEMBER, 1940

M.02910/41, "H.M.S. *Carnarvon Castle*, Report of Action with German Raider on 5th December, 1940," contains a diagram of the tracks of the *Carnarvon Castle* and the raider. The diagram is not to scale and the enemy's track differs in many respects from the data in the text of the report. The raider's track has therefore been redrawn in Plan 2 to conform as far as possible with the available data, but, as in Plan 1, it must be regarded merely as a diagram of the enemy's probable movements. The *Carnarvon Castle's* diagram is reproduced in Plan 3.

(C46488) 500 11/42

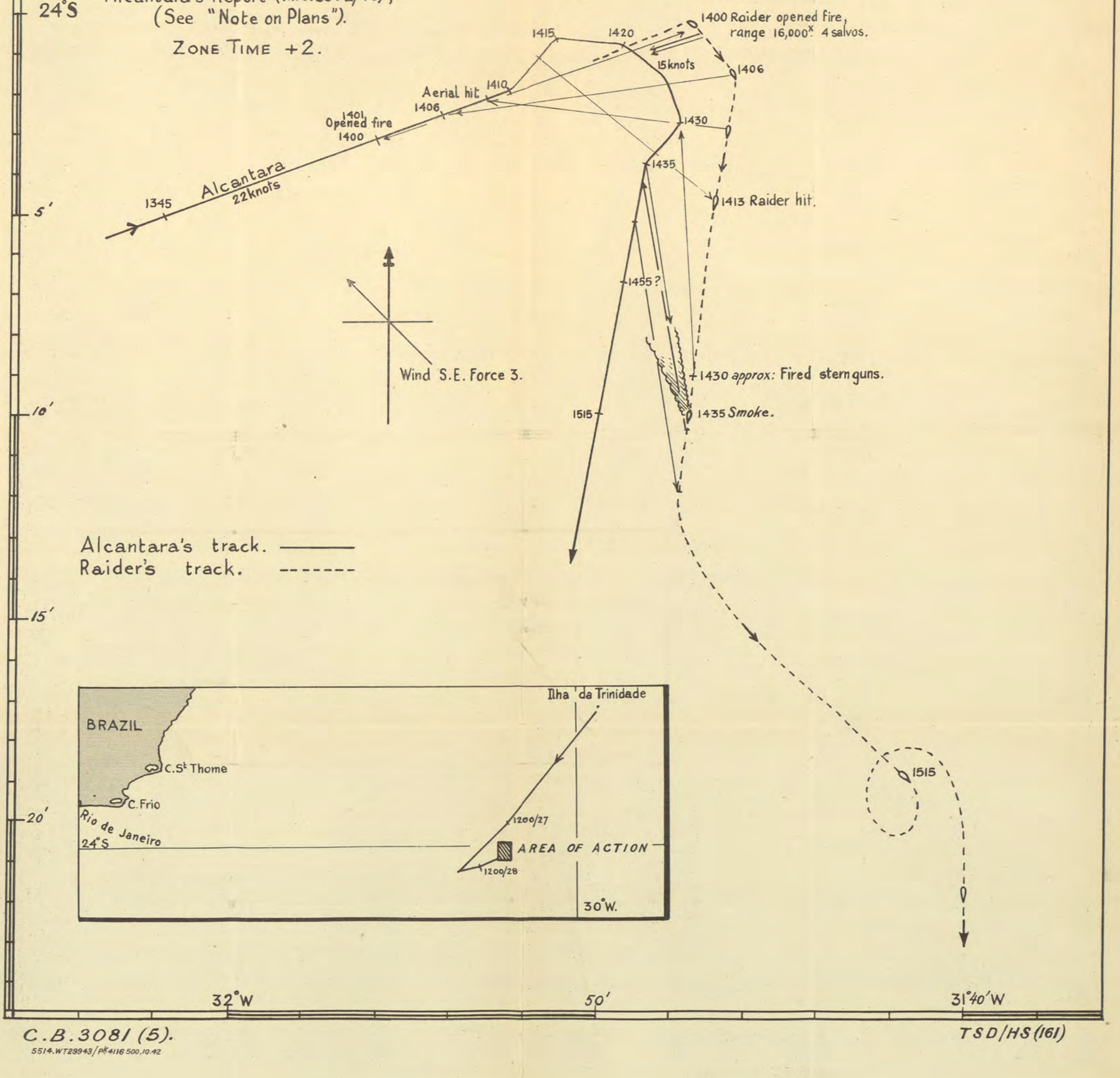
PLAN 1

Fire,
4 salvos.

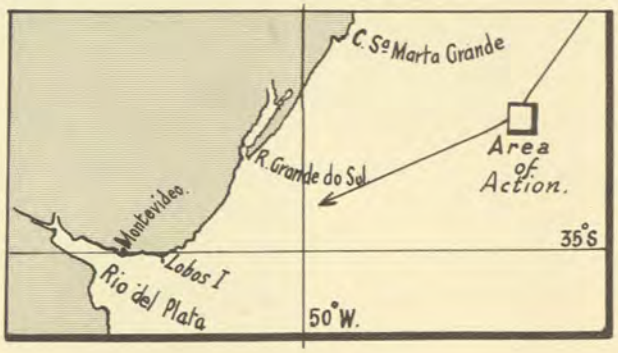
ACTION BETWEEN H.M.S. ALCANTARA AND A RAIDER.
JULY 28, 1940.

N.B. The enemy's track is based solely on Alcantara's Report (M.018572/40), (See "Note on Plans").

ZONE TIME +2.



PLAN 2

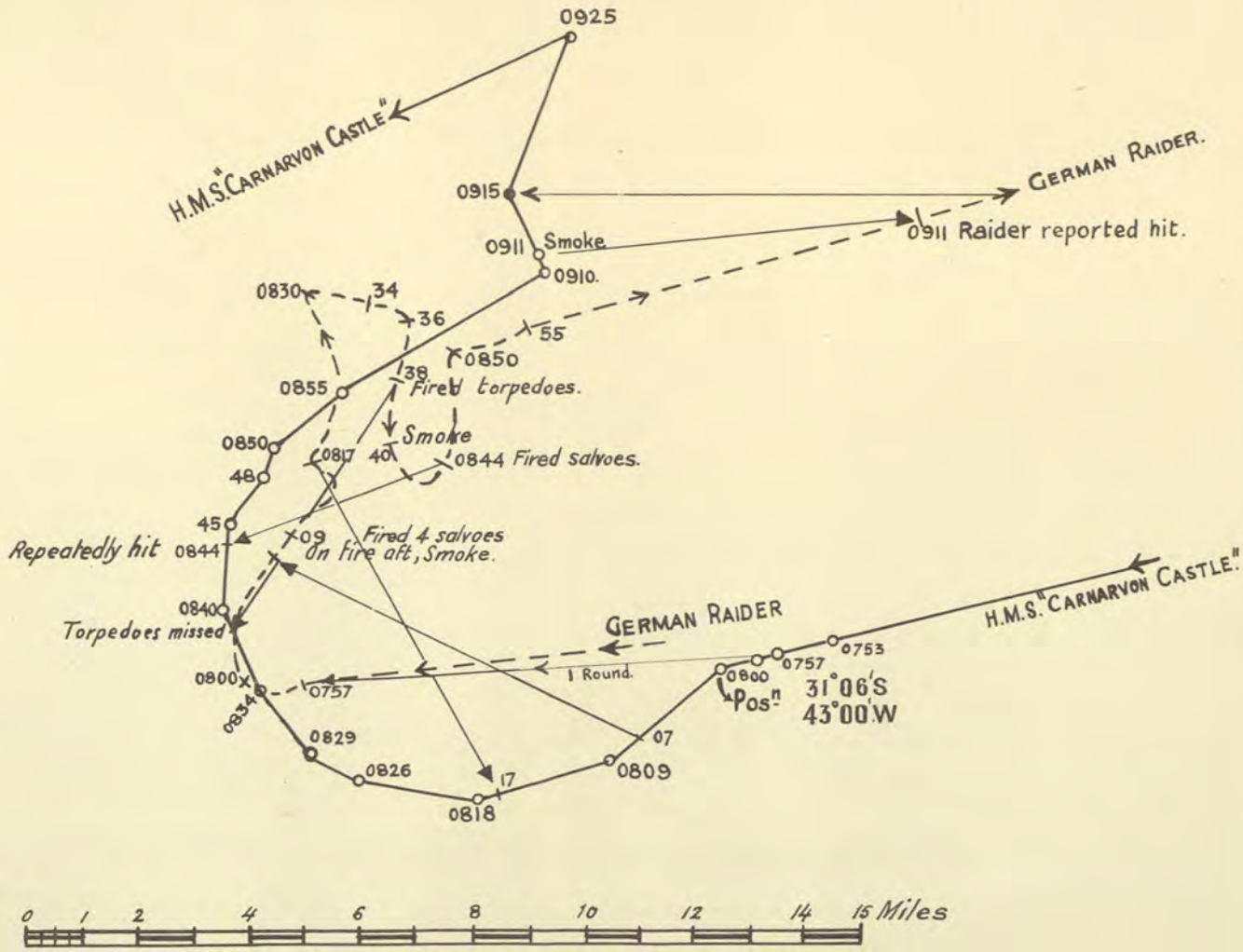


H.M.S. CARNARVON CASTLE'S ACTION WITH A GERMAN RAIDER, DECR 5TH 1940.

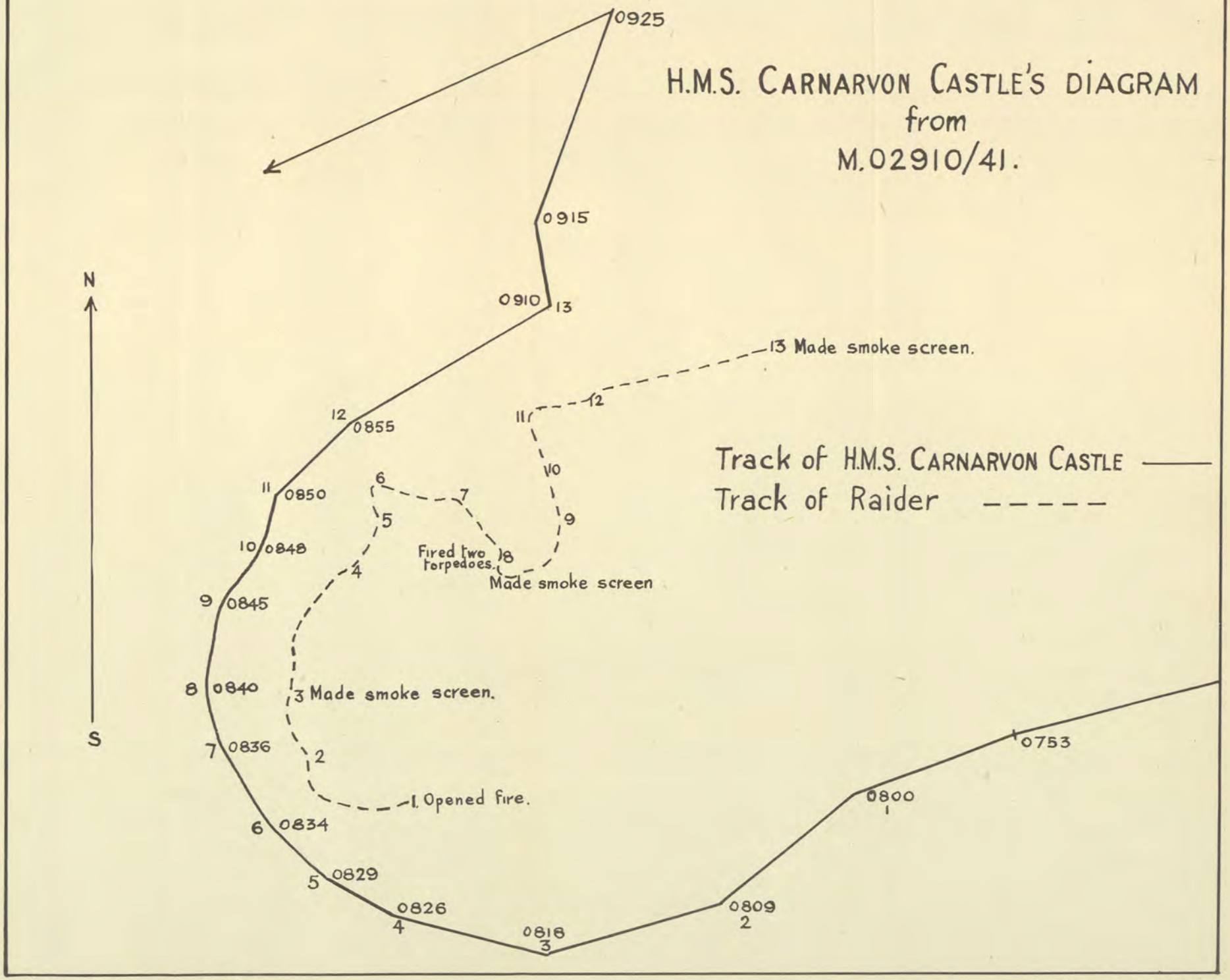
This plan is based on a diagram, (Plan 3), in M.02910/41, (See "Notes on Plans").

Zone Time + 2.

Wind N.E. Force 3.



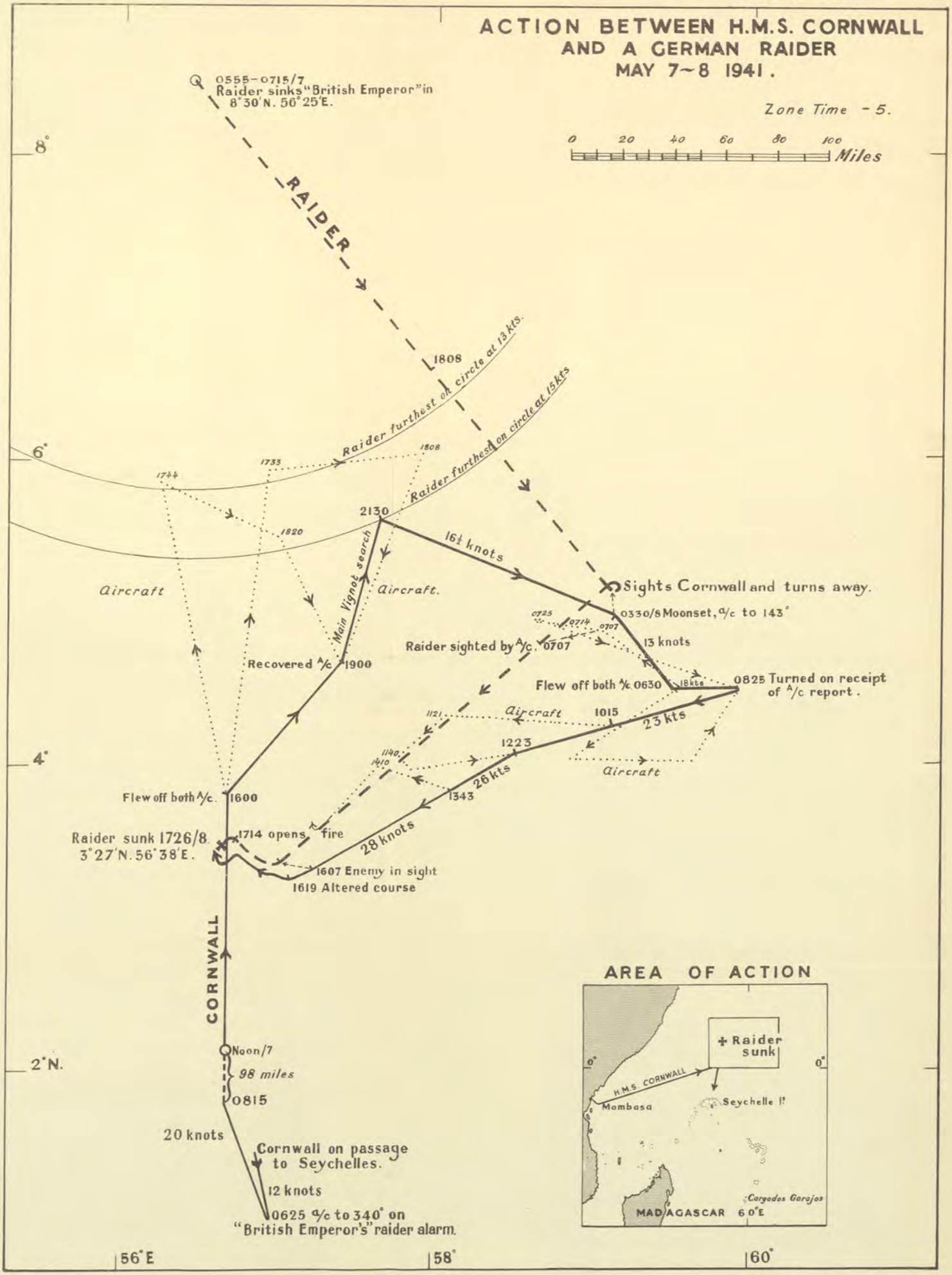
PLAN 3



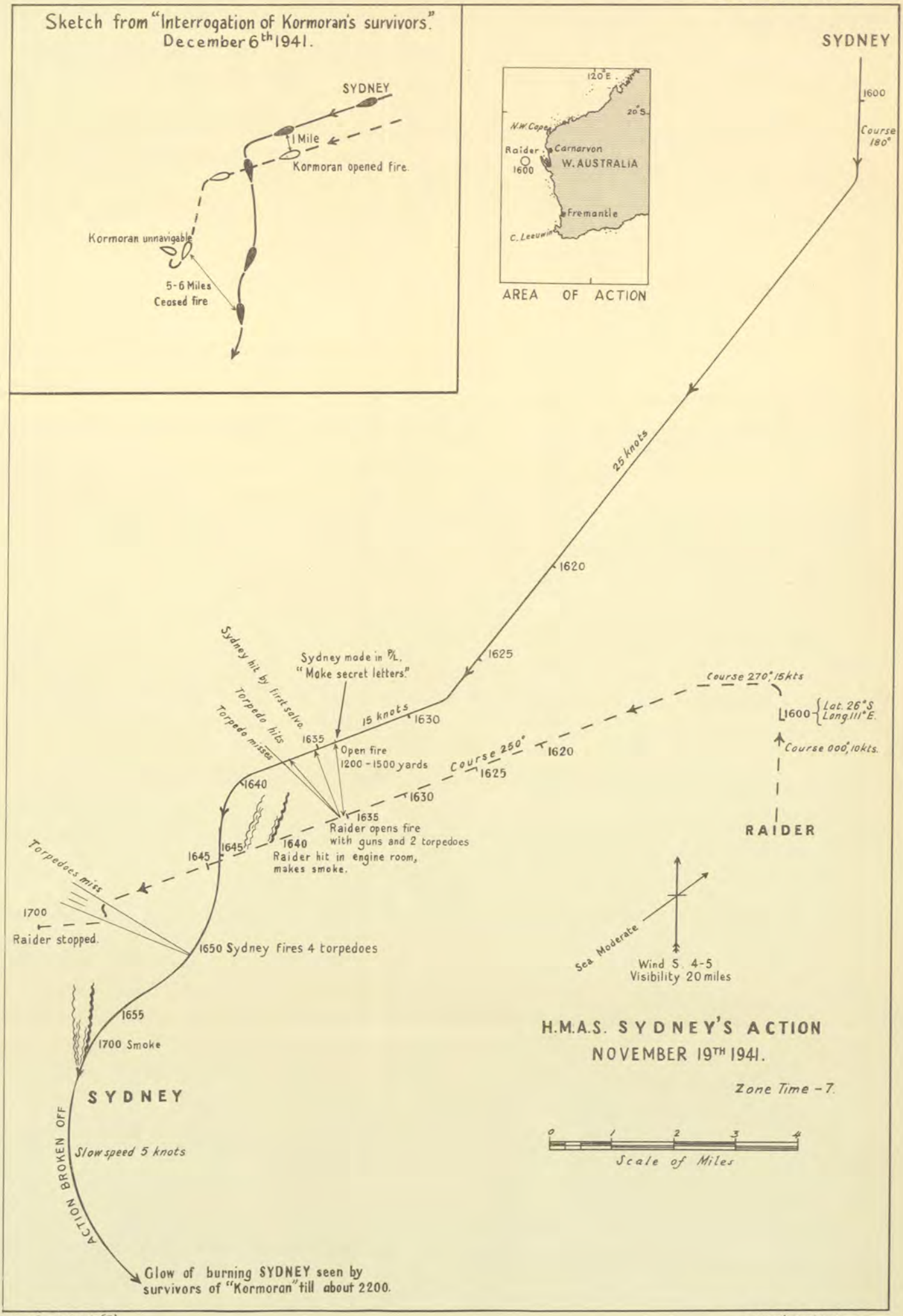
C.B. 3081 (5).
5514

TSD/HS (163).

PLAN 4


ACTION BETWEEN H.M.S. CORNWALL AND A GERMAN RAIDER MAY 7~8 1941.
Zone Time - 5.
0 20 40 60 80 100 Miles
0555-0715/7 Raider sinks "British Emperor" in 8°30'N. 56°25'E.
RAIDER
1808
Raider furthest on circle at 13 kts.
Raider furthest on circle at 15kts
8°
6°
4°
2°N.
1744
1733
1808
1820
2130
16½ knots
Aircraft
Main Vignot search
Aircraft.
Sights Cornwall and turns away.
0330/8 Moonset, a/c to 143°
0725
0714
0707
13 knots
Raider sighted by A/c. 0707
Recovered A/c 1900
Flew off both A/c 0630
18kts
0825 Turned on receipt of A/c report.
1121
Aircraft
1015
23 kts
1223
1140
1410
Aircraft
26 kts
1343
Flew off both A/c. 1600
Raider sunk 1726/8. 3°27'N. 56°38'E.
1714 opens fire
28 knots
1607 Enemy in sight
1619 Altered course
CORNWALL
Noon/7
98 miles
0815
20 knots
Cornwall on passage to Seychelles.
12 knots
0625 a/c to 340° on "British Emperor's" raider alarm.
56°E
58°
60°
AREA OF ACTION
Raider sunk
H.M.S. CORNWALL
Mombasa
Seychelle Is
Cargados Garajos
MADAGASCAR 60°E

PLAN 5

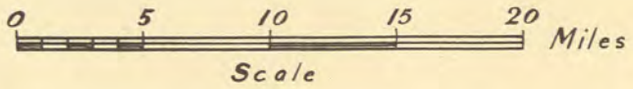


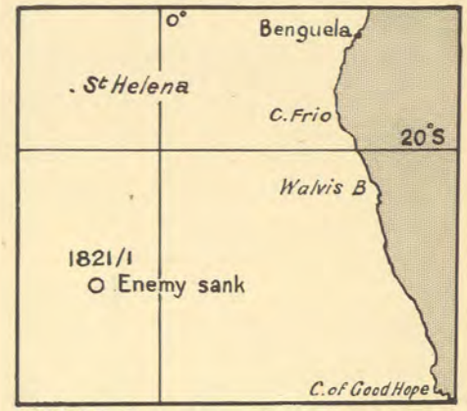
C. B. 3081 (5).
5514

TSD/HS (184)

PLAN 6

H.M.S. DORSETSHIRE'S ACTION.
1ST DECEMBER 1941.





28°S

1730 Enemy lowered boats
1751 On fire.
1821 Sank.

A/c over boats 1954

1718

1806

1801

1812

1817 Sighted A/c returning

A/c sighted boats towing 2000

1750

1740

1827

Enemy sighted 1633

1731

Fired warning shots

5 Boats first sighted 1708

1728

1846

Recovered A/c

AIRCRAFT RETURNING FROM P.M. PATROL

1900

1718

1515 Catapulted A/c

1708 First sighted boats

1910

1920

H.M.S. DORSETSHIRE

1700

1935 Catapulted A/c

1600

2000 Sunset

First sighted enemy 1633

2013

2042 Recovered A/c

AIRCRAFT P.M. PATROL

2100

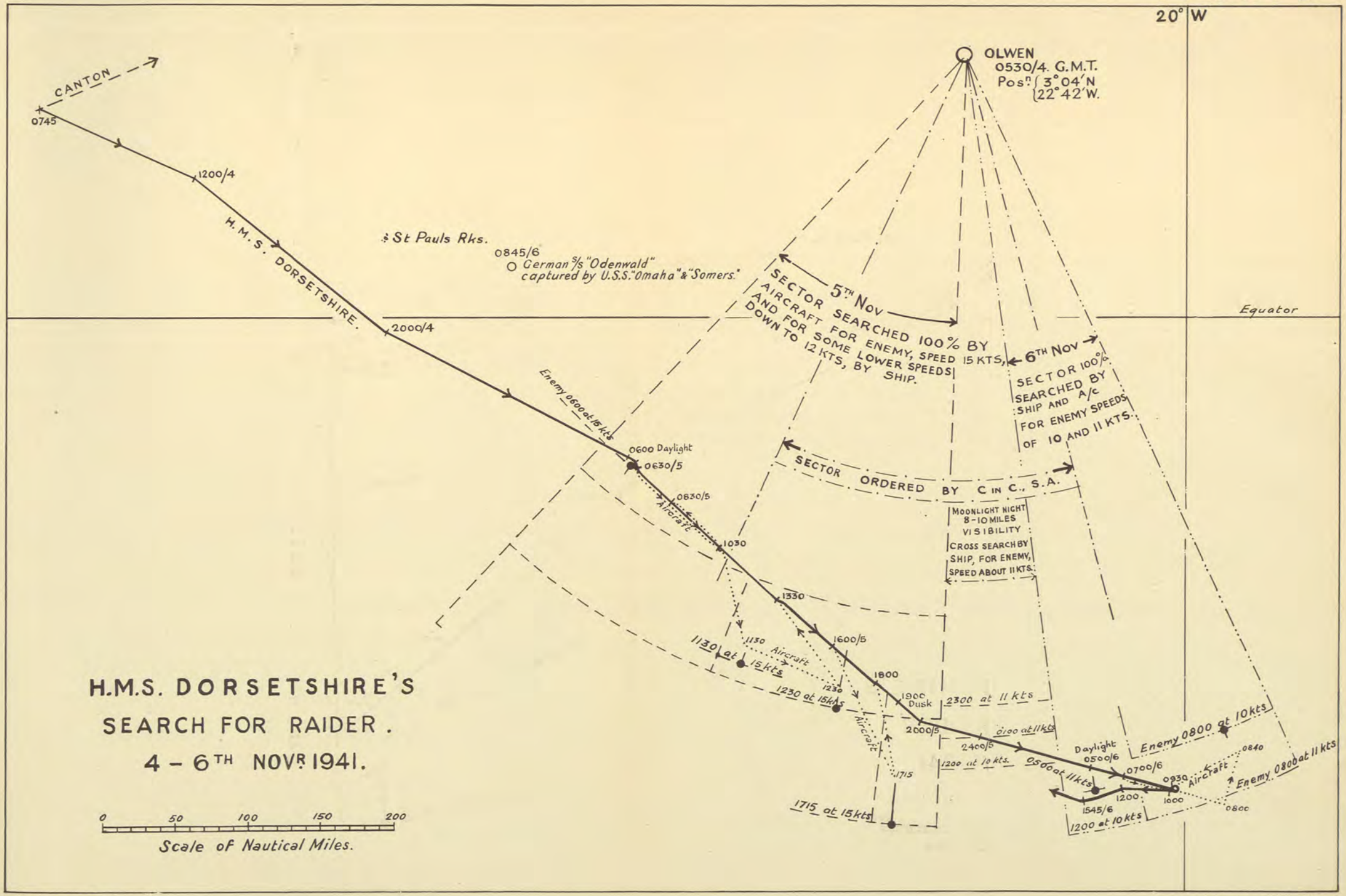
H.M.S. DORSETSHIRE.

4°W

C.B. 3081 (5).
5514

TSD/HS (183)

PLAN 7

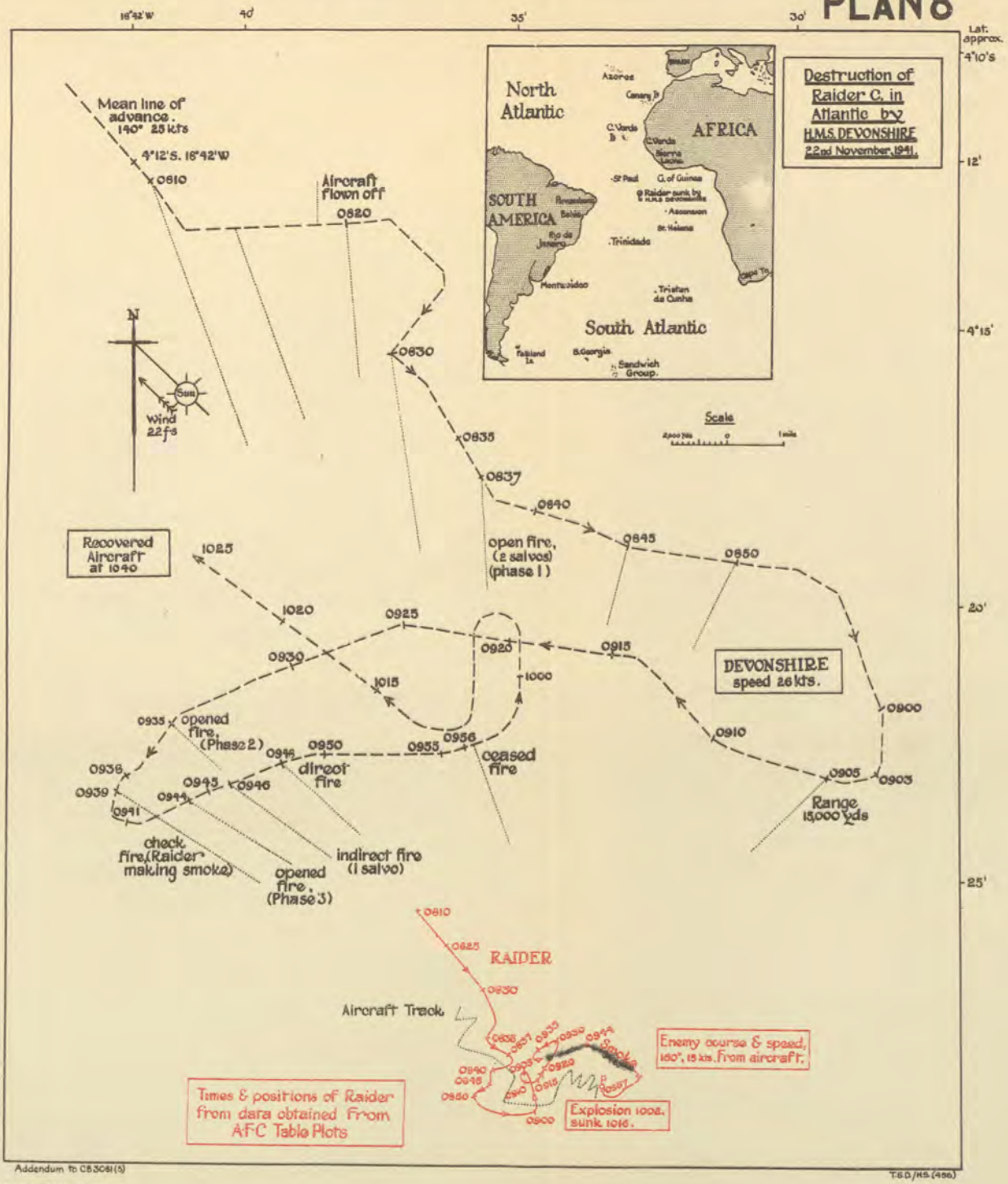


H.M.S. DORSETSHIRE'S SEARCH FOR RAIDER. 4 – 6TH NOVR 1941.

Inserted by P.310/45.

C.A.F.O. "P" SERIES DIAGRAM 19/45

PLAN 8



Addendum to CB 3081(5)

T.S.D./H.S.(486)

414/45. C.

LIST OF BATTLE SUMMARIES ISSUED OR IN PREPARATION.

	Battle Summary No.	
C.B. 3081 (1) ..	1	OPERATIONS AT ORAN, 23rd–26th July, 1940.
	2	ACTION OFF CAPE SPADA, CRETE, 19th July, 1940.
	3	ATTACK ON *Richelieu* DAKAR, 8th July, 1940.
C.B. 3081 (2) ..	4	OPERATIONS, CRETE, 20th May–1st June, 1941.
C.B. 3081 (3) ..	5	OPERATIONS AGAINST *Bismarck*, 23rd–27th May, 1941.
C.B. 3081 (4) ..	6	BARDIA, BOMBARDMENTS, 1940–1941.
	7	GENOA, BOMBARDMENT, 9th February, 1941.
	8	ACTION OFF CAPE CALABRIA, 9th July, 1940.
*C.B. 3081 (6) ..	9	ACTION OFF CAPE SPARTIVENTO, 27th November, 1940.
	10	ATTACK ON TARANTO, 11th November, 1940.
*C.B. 3081 (7) ..	11	*Scharnhorst and Gneisenau*, 12th February, 1941.
	12	ST. NAZAIRE, 28th March, 1942.
C.B. 3081 (5) ..	13	ACTIONS WITH ENEMY RAIDERS, 1940–1941.

* In preparation.